Jordan Times

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جوردان تايمز يومية سياسية تصدر بالانجليزية عن المؤسسة الصحفية الاردنية ،الراي،

'Israel owes PNA $100 million'

RAMALLAH, West Bank (AFP) — Israel owes the self-rule authority more than $100 million in repayments on VAT and custom duties, a Palestinian official said Monday. Atef Alawneh, undersecretary at the Palestinian National Authority's finance ministry, said Israel had agreed to return the value-added tax and customs duties collected on Israeli goods bought by Palestinians in Israel and then imported to the Gaza Strip and Jericho since the launch of self-rule in May. Also to be transferred are income taxes and health insurance fees from Palestinians living in autonomous areas but working in Israel. Money collected from the Israeli-occupied West Bank in the same ways is to be reimbursed back-dated to December. Out of a total of $27 million handed back so far most was from income taxes and health insurance fees, Mr. Alawneh told AFP. But he said there were outstanding debts from VAT and import duties which according to Israeli estimates amounted to about $115 million dating from June 1994 to the end of March.

Egypt proposes NPT compromise formula

CAIRO (AFP) — Egypt has put forward a compromise formula to resolve its dispute with Israel over the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), which the Jewish state has refused to sign, a senior Foreign Ministry official said Monday. Under the proposal, Israel would officially commit itself to joining the NPT three years after its renewal and would immediately begin taking measures to halt its nuclear weapons programme, said the official, who refused to be identified. The two countries would also begin negotiations to eliminate weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East and to set up a procedure for mutual supervision of their nuclear capabilities, the official said. Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Musa said Monday he had presented a series of proposals to Israel. He added that "contacts and suggestions are underway to make the Middle East a region free of weapons of mass destruction, including nuclear weapons." Mr. Musa declined to give details of the proposals. He added that these "ideas have not been discussed in depth up to now," but they are "under examination."

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Amman today hosts Arab-Israeli meeting on displaced

PNA, Jordan and Egypt to present joint working paper outlining modalities of return of displaced

By Ghadeer Taher

Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The foreign ministers of Jordan, Egypt and Israel and a senior representative of the Palestine National Authority (PNA) meet here today in the first such meeting to discuss the repatriation of Palestinians displaced in the 1967 war, one of the most complex issues of the Middle East peace process.

Given that the Arab parties and Israel remain far apart on the very basic question — the number of Palestinians who were forced out of their homes or fled the fighting during the war — the meeting is not expected come up with any immediate solution to the problem, observers say.

While the Arab sides estimate the number of displaced around 850,000, Israel asserts that the figure is closer to 200,000. This huge gap is believed to stem from an Israeli count that takes into consideration only those who actually left the West Bank and Gaza in 1967 and does not take their descendants into account.

The Arab sides have affirmed there was no question of discussing whether the displaced Palestinians have the right to return, since Israel recognised the right of the return of the displaced in the September 1993 declaration of principles that it signed with the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO).

The Amman meeting, which is called for in the declaration of principles, will focus on working out an "orderly" return of the displaced, according to Jordanian officials and Arab diplomats.

In comments carried in the Israeli press on Sunday, Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres seemed to indicate that Israel saw the Amman meeting as a forum to exchange views rather than immediately setting the mechanism sought by the Arabs.

According to officials, one of the most tangible outcomes of the meeting is expected to be the formation of a committee that would determine the "technical aspects" of the displaced such as their number, the criteria to be used, modalities and a timetable for their repatriation.

Ahead of the meeting to be held at Al Hashmiyeh Palace, Foreign Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti held talks on Monday with Nabil Shaath, minister of planning and international cooperation in the PNA, in what was seen as Jordanian-Palestinian coordination at the four-party encounter.

His Majesty King Hussein also met with Dr. Shaath, who delivered to him a message from PNA President and PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat (see separate story).

Mr. Kabariti told reporters after his talks with Dr. Shaath that Jordan's primary concern was to work towards establishing the "right of return" and compensation for the displaced.

"Jordan fully supports the right of the Palestinian refugees and displaced to return home," Mr. Kabariti said. "Jordan believes that it will be difficult to achieve just and comprehensive peace in the region without a just and acceptable solution to the issue" of the refugees and displaced.

"The right of return," said Mr. Kabariti, "remains a basic human right that does not fade away by time or after being compensated in any manner and is enshrined in international law."

Jordan has stressed that it would not impose a solution on any refugee or displaced, all of whom carry Jordanian passports and enjoy full citizenship rights in the Kingdom.

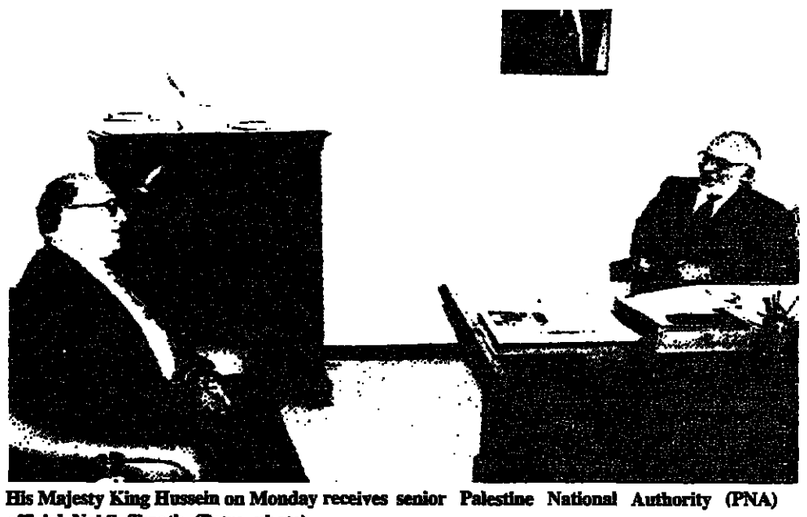
"It is a purely personal decision and choice," Mr. Kabariti reiterated this position on Monday. "No solution will be imposed on anyone, whether it is return or compensation," he told the Jordan Times.

Jordan will also seek state-to-state compensation without prejudice to the rights of the refugees and displaced for the burden the Kingdom has shouldered by hosting refugees from the 1948 and 1967 wars, officials said.

Dr. Shaath told Petra that he expected Israel to drag its feet in the entire issue of the displaced and that he was not optimistic of a quick solution to one of the most emotion-laden topics on the negotiating table.

"It is difficult to imagine that Israel will oppose the right of the return of the

(Continued on page 7)



His Majesty King Hussein on Monday receives senior Palestine National Authority (PNA) official Nabil Shaath (Petra photo)

King receives Arafat's message voicing appreciation for support

AMMAN (J.T.) — His Majesty King Hussein received at the Royal Court on *Monday senior Palestine* National Authority (PNA) official Nabil Shaath, who conveyed to the King a verbal message from PNA President Yasser Arafat.

The Jordan News Agency, Petra, said that the message voiced the Palestinian leadership's appreciation of Jordanian efforts in support *for the Israeli-Palestinian* track of the peace process and Jordan's continued backing for the Palestinians to regain their full rights on their national soil.

The message also contained congratulations to King Hussein following the success of the minor surgery he underwent last Friday at *the King Hussein Medical* Centre.

Present at the audience were Prime Minister Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker, Royal Court Chief Marwan Al Qasem and Foreign Minister Abdul Karim Kabariti.

King, Mubarak exchange greetings

AMMAN (Petra) — His Majesty King Hussein and Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak on Monday exchanged good wishes on 'Eid Al Fitr, and President Mubarak congratulated the King on the success of the minor surgery he underwent Friday. The two leaders also exchanged views over issues of common concern and the topics to be discussed by the Jordan Egyptian Higher Committee, which is due to convene in Cairo later this month. Also Monday King Hussein received a cable of congratulations from Sultan Qaboos of Oman on the success of the surgery the King underwent Friday at the King Hussein Medical Centre.

Kozyrev to visit Israel in April

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Vladimir Shumeiko, chairman of the upper house of Russia's parliament, began a four-day trip to Israel on Monday during which he will prepare for the first official visit by Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev. Officials said Mr. Shumeiko would meet Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and Foreign Minister Shimon Peres on Tuesday. Mr. Kozyrev, whose country co-sponsors the Middle East peace process with the United States, is expected to visit Israel in early April, a foreign ministry spokesman said. He made a brief working trip to Tel Aviv on March 11 when Russia floated the idea of a second Middle East peace conference and also attended the signing of the Israeli-Jordanian peace treaty Oct. 26. The foreign ministry said neither visit was official.

EU agrees deal with Turkey

BRUSSELS (AFP) — European Union (EU) foreign ministers on Monday agreed terms for entering a customs union with Turkey, some 30 years after talks on an accord designed to anchor the country to the West first got underway. Turkish Foreign Minister Murat Karayalcin signalled his country's agreement to the accord at a meeting with his European Union counterparts and the ministers were due to have dinner with Turkish Prime Minister Tansu Ciller.

High Court okays sale of Barings

LONDON (AFP) — The British High Court on Monday approved administrator Ernst and Young's plan to sell the collapsed merchant bank Barings to Dutch banking group ING. Judge Richard Scott said he had come to the decision despite some uncertainties in the deal outlined by the administrators (see page 9).

'Crime in Russia threatens security'

MOSCOW (AFP) — Participants in a Security Council meeting Monday said that rising crime was undermining the power of the state and threatening the country's national security, Interfax news agency reported. The agency, citing unnamed sources present at the meeting chaired by President Boris Yeltsin, said the country's top leaders debated the issue for nearly two and a half hours but no official announcements were forthcoming by early evening. The meeting took place following last week's assassination of *one of the country's top jour*nalists, Vladislav Listyev. "The impunity that criminals enjoy and the absence of efficient results in the fight against crime discredit the power of the state, give rise to a defiant attitude toward the state and finally threaten Russia's national security," the sources said in describing the gist of the meeting. They added that members of the council harshly criticised those involved in the fight against crime.

Syria rejects Rabin deal on Golan, urges new ideas

DAMASCUS (Agencies) — Syria on Monday poured scorn on the latest Israeli peace proposal and urged U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher to come armed with fresh ideas on his upcoming Middle East shuttle.

Israel said it effectively regards this summer as a deadline for achieving peace as the Israeli and U.S. administrations head into an election year in 1996.

Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin said in remarks *broadcast by Israel Radio on* Sunday that Israel had a right to test the normalisation with Syria on the basis of a very small withdrawal.

He said there was no agreement on how long the withdrawal would take "or what the ultimate pullback line would be but pointed out that a similar test period was applied when Israel handed back the Sinai to Egypt under a 1979 peace treaty.

"We said we want only a very small withdrawal at the beginning and to put it to the test for two-and-a-half to three years, to the test of full normalistion — embassies, an open border," Mr. Rabin said.

But Tishreen said "such statements clearly reflect the Israeli government's unseriousness to reach peace with Syria and consequently show its lack of interest to achieve comprehensive peace because nobody could talk about a stable peace in the region without Syria."

Israel's Deputy Foreign Minister Yossi Beilin blamed Syria for the deadlock. "If the Syrians are not willing to hear our positions and if that is not enough for them, it *seems to me we've proved...* the Syrians are the ones who are not willing to move," he told Israel radio.

The Syrian government daily Tishreen said Israel should prove its desire for peace by withdrawing fully from the Golan Heights.

"There is no doubt that the aggressor is the party which should be tested... Israel, which did not respect the United Nations and its resolutions, should prove its peaceful intentions," Tishreen said.

"Israel occupied the Golan, the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, Jerusalem, and South Lebanon. There is nothing which could prove its peace intentions except its full withdrawal from all the occupied Arab lands," it said.

The daily said Israeli statements casting doubt over Syria's peace intentions were aimed at "foiling the peace mission of U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher."

Mr. Christopher will visit Syria and Israel this week as part of a regional tour. He will try to get the Syrian-Israeli negotiations, suspended since December, restarted *again*.

In Israel, foreign ministry spokesman said Israel and Syria were now fast approaching a deadline for a breakthrough.

"The summer of 1995 is something of a deadline in negotiations with Syria," spokesman Yigal Palmor told reporters.

"This visit (by Christopher) is different. If nothing is achieved probably nothing will be achieved in the next few years, simply, there is no more time.

"If both sides now want to breakthrough, it's now or

(Continued on page 7)

PNA police detain Hamas preachers

GAZA CITY (Agencies) — Palestinian police have arrested two prominent Hamas clerics and two others wanted by Israel, sparking a protest in southern Gaza, a senior member of the group said Monday.

Emad Faluji, a leader of the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) said the militants from the southern refugee camp of Rafah were detained late Saturday.

Mohammad Abu Shammala and Raed Al Attar were wanted by Israel for taking part in the killing of informers during the occupation of the Gaza Strip that ended with the launch of Palestinian autonomy last May.

Mr. Faluji also said the clerics, Sheikh Salameh Al Safadi from Gaza City and Sheikh Ahmad Nimr from Khan Yunis refugee camp, were held after they gave sermons critical of the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) last Friday.

About 400 people marched through Khan Yunis on Sunday night, carrying banners *condemning the arrest of* Sheikh Nimr and demanding his release.

"We protest the arrest of Sheikh Ahmad Nimr for having said the truth," read one of the banners.

In his sermon, Sheikh Nimr, 54 accused PLO leader Yasser Arafat's self-rule authority of bowing to Israel and said the autonomy agreement was weak.

"I expect the arrest of Sheikh Nimr to produce trouble in Khan Yunis, he was a very popular preacher," Mr. Faluji said.

At the Hamas-controlled Palestine Mosque in Gaza City, Sheikh Safadi accused Mr. Arafat's intelligence services of torturing prisoners, and called them "supporters of tyrants."

Mr. Arafat has been under pressure from Israel to rein in militants opposed to the autonomy accords. Some 20 Hamas members have been detained in the last month, as well as about 60 from the smaller Islamic Jihad and the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine.

Israel has for the first time placed a Palestinian in detention for one year without charge or trial, doubling the normal six-month custody

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Jordan calls on Copenhagen summit to focus on NGOs

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) should be a focal point in any international deliberations over how to overcome poverty and social injustice, Her Royal Highness Princess Basma said on Monday.

Princess Basma, addressing the U.N. Summit on World Development which opened in Copenhagen, Denmark on Monday, pointed out that NGOs could play a key role in implementing joint action undertaken by governments and people.

Noting that social development and economic development go hand in hand and are integral to building peace and social stability, Princess Basma said:

"In considering models for sustainable development, it is important not only to promote development that generates economic growth, but *which searches for equitable*, just distribution as well...

"However, in the drive towards progress of modernity should not override some of the traditions of our developing societies, which until now have preserved the fabric of our culture. We do not wish to pay the high price many developed countries have paid with their overemphasis on consumerism and materialist values."

Princess Basma called for innovative approaches to creating greater opportuni*ties for employment for* women and men as well as facilities that help entrepreneurs.

"Development projects often fall short because funding is tied to an unrealistic period of time in which it is assumed people will acquire the necessary skills to become economically independent," she said. "This approach leaves people at the grassroots frustrated and without hope.

"We must also remember *that many people from* vulnerable groups do not have the strength to participate in a pro-active way; they are too busy surviving. We need to be more patient and more willing to give."

Princess Basma asserted that the way to achieve these ends was through joint action by governments and people. "Such a partnership can only be based on solidarity, respect for human rights and mutual responsibility," she said.

"The role of non-governmental organisations in pursuing this new ideal of social progress is also vitally important," the Princess told

(Continued on page 7)

U.N. launches offensive on world poverty, page 8.

Official denies 'closure' of Aaron tomb linked to Israeli tourists

By Beatrix Immenkamp with agencies

AMMAN — Reports in the Israeli media of Israeli tourists desecrating the tomb of Aaron in the ancient Nabatean city of Petra by removing parts of ancient inscriptions and etching Hebrew lettering on some ancient stones were rejected as unfounded *by Ministry of Tourism* Under-Secretary Ghassan Mifleh on Monday.

Dr. Mifleh told the Jordan Times that people he had sent to Petra Sunday night to *verify reports of desecration* broadcast on Israeli Television Sunday evening had Monday morning told him that no such desecration had taken place.

Dr. Mifleh also rejected baseless reports on Israeli radio that Jordan had issued a ban barring tourists, including Israelis, from visiting the grave of the brother of the Prophet Moses.

According to Dr. Mifleh, a temporary one-day closure became necessary at the beginning of the month as a result of rainfall in the region, which made the trails leading up to the tomb unsafe. "Such closures, of the trails to Aaron's tomb, as well as the ancient city of Petra itself, have been ordered in the past any time weather conditions gave rise to concern for visitors' safety," Dr. Mifleh explained, denying any connection between the reported deconsecration and the one-day closure.

He added that the tomb was open to visitors Monday.

According to the Associ*ated Press, Israeli officials* and the Israeli media interpreted the temporary closure as a permanent measure. According to AP, "(Israeli) Tourism Minister Uzi Bar-Am asked advisors for possible steps after Jordan shut the tomb of Aaron to Israelis last week," the Israeli news agency Itim reported that "ultra-orthodox rabbis planned a visit to Jordan this week to negotiate a lift of the ban, so they could organise a first annual pilgrimage to the tomb of Aaron, the first high priest of the ancient Israelites,"

AP reported that the Israeli government was concerned about the bad behaviour of some Israeli tourists in Jordan, which, in the words of Tourism Minister Bar-Am, "tarnished Israel's image."

There have been incidents of theft and fraud in addition to the alleged vandalism, reported to have occurred about a week ago.

AP quoted Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin as saying on Israeli radio that he *hoped "a way would be* found to prevent the ugly Israeli from continuing these actions." He was also quoted as warning that Israel would not come to the rescue of Israeli tourists caught vandalising or stealing abroad.

More than 16,000 Israelis tourists had visited Jordan since borders were opened last summer when peace was declared ending a 46-year state of war between the two countries, according to unofficial statistics.

Bar association defies ministry directive to ban W. Bank lawyers

By Amy Henderson

Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The Jordanian Bar Association (JBA) said Monday it will not comply with a letter it received Monday from the minister of justice barring West Bank lawyers from participating in the association's elections scheduled for March 10.

The letter from Minister of Justice Hisham Tel said that West Bank lawyers should not be included in the JBA general assembly roster and that their participation in upcoming elections should not be allowed.

"I want to express that the decision to sever legal and *administrative ties with the* West Bank calls for severing any link between the bar association and West Bank lawyers," the minister wrote in the letter, a copy of which was made available to the Jordan Times.

"Therefore, out of respect for the sovereignty of the state and its decision which represents its higher policy and in adherence to that, I require you to delete the names of West Bank lawyers from the general assembly list and not to allow their participation in meetings of the general assembly or the election," it said.

The association is questioning why the instruction came at this time, said its president, Kamal Nasser. He contended that it was part of a government move to pressure the professional unions away from political activity.

This is the second time that the JBA has clashed with the government over the authority of the association. The first dispute, still unsettled, was whether or not the annual meeting of the International Bar Association would be held in Amman and whether Israeli lawyers could attend. The JBA rejected hosting the function because, it says, its regulations as well as those of the Arab Lawyers Union (of which the JBA is a member) forbid any cooperation with Israeli lawyers.

The lawyers association has been an outspoken opponent of normalisation with Israel, and the issue has become a central issue in upcoming elections for the council and the presidency.

In his letter of designation to Prime Minister Sharif Zeid Ben Shaker in January, His Majesty King Hussein pointed to "the need to have the professional associations and unions working in their fields, keeping in mind their basic duties and raison d'etre to improve the performance of their members... instead of remaining standstill and repeating political cliches and indulging in work the associations were not originally established to do and which they have no reasons to deal with."

The prime minister also addressed the issue of professional associations in his speech to Parliament in January. "We are confident that the various federations and *professional unions would* bear their own responsibilities to peace and the nation... that these institutions' non-commitment to the decision of the majority would be a breach of the national consensus and would not serve the interests of the nation or achieve its aspirations," the prime minister said.

"We are keen on protecting political pluralism and are committed to the rule of the

(Continued on page 7)

Histadrut scandal rocks Israeli Labour Party

By Jeffrey Heller
Reuter

TEL AVIV — Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's Labour Party has been politically stung by a police investigation of corruption at Israel's main trade unions federation, its long-time powerbase, a minister said on Monday.

Police are looking into allegations that membership dues to the Histadrut were used to finance several Labour officials' election campaigns in party primaries in 1992.

An estimated 67 per cent of all Israeli workers, from all political persuasions, belong to the Histadrut.

The investigation had been under way for months, but the scandal drew banner headlines — and questions about Mr. Rabin's political future — on Sunday when Israeli newspapers reported a low-level Histadrut official had turned state's witness.

"Without a doubt we are having a rough ride right now because investigations like these... are a political shock for the Labour Party," Trade Minister Micha Harish said on Monday.

"As we know from the experience of others, (the investigation) can go on for months. We hope it will be completed quickly with a clear result," he told army radio.

Mr. Rabin, whose popularity has plunged in Israel over the slow pace of peace and a string of Arab guerrilla bombings, said late on Sunday: "Whatever some individuals may or may not have done in no way reflects on the party or the government."

On Monday, Mr. Rabin said once the investigation ended, any legal steps required would be taken. "There is no one above the law and there is no framework above the law," he said.

Political columnist Nahum Barnea, in a front-page commentary in the mass-circulation Yedioth Ahronoth newspaper, said there could be a public backlash with the force of a "bombshell" that could ultimately destroy Mr. Rabin's career.

"His ship of state is breaking up and sinking," he wrote.

Israel's Jerusalem Post newspaper said at least one cabinet minister, Yisrael Kessar, a former Histadrut chairman who now holds the transport portfolio in the government, had been questioned by police over the corruption allegations.

Mr. Kessar issued a statement denying any wrongdoing. "I rose from the ranks of the proletariat, which I faithfully represented," Mr. Kessar was quoted by the Post as saying.

Police have yet to file charges against anyone.

Silvan Shalom, a legislator from the main right-wing opposition Likud Party, said he believed the investigation would uncover layers of corruption at the Histadrut.

"Labour has treated the Histadrut as if it was part of the party for many years," he told army radio.

For many Israelis, the Histadrut — whose Tel Aviv headquarters are nicknamed "the Kremlin" — has been synonymous with bungling bureaucracy and political patronage.

Its pension funds are running a $12 billion deficit and its wide network of health care clinics has been ailing for years.

Labour's hold on Histadrut slipped last May when former Health Minister Haim Ramon, booted out of the party for challenging Mr. Rabin on health care reform, was elected Histadrut head.

Mr. Ramon, 44, pledged at the time to free Israeli workers from the "terror of the Histadrut machinery."

UNEASY CALM: Sitting beneath a picture of their Shiite leader Abdul Ali Mazari, Hezb-e-Wahdat faction fighters guard the ruins of Darulaman Palace in south Kabul. Troops loyal to his rival, Afghan President Burhanuddin Rabbani, attacked Wahdat on Monday (AFP photo)

Ramos launches fund to help abused Filipinas

ABU DHABI (AFP) — Philippine President Fidel Ramos left the United Arab Emirates (UAE) on Monday after launching a fund to assist Filipina housemaids who are maltreated by their employers, his embassy said.

After two hours of late night talks with UAE President Sheikh Zayed Ibn Sultan Al Nahayan, Mr. Ramos announced the donation of $5,000 for the fund and urged the nearly 80,000 Philippine citizens in the emirates to subscribe.

"It is a very generous gesture from the president and shows his concern about his citizens abroad," a Philippines embassy spokesman told AFP.

"The donation constitutes the founding base of the fund, which will depend on voluntary contributions from the Philippine community in the UAE. It will help alleviate the suffering of some of our citizens.

Mr. Ramos, making his first trip to the UAE, announced the project at a meeting with more than 4,000 compatriots who packed the national theatre at the information and culture ministry late Sunday.

He gave another $5,000 to a Filipina housemaid who has been under the care of the embassy after she was allegedly tortured by her Egyptian employers in the northern emirate of Umm Al Quwain.

Nelfa Baltar, 26, was flying back home through Sharjah airport two months ago when security men stopped her and enquired about the bruises on her face.

She told them her employer, an Egyptian couple who brought her from the Philippines six months earlier, had frequently beaten and tortured her.

The couple, who have been detained, have denied the charges, saying she had a fight with Bangladeshi men outside their house. Their trial at the Umm Al Quwain criminal court will resume later this month.

It was the latest in a series of incidents involving abuses by employers of their maids in the Gulf states.

Spring brings despair to Iraqi Kurds

By Tolle Aram
Agence France Presse

SALAHUDDIN, Iraq — Kurdish hopes that self-rule in northern Iraq would usher in a bright new era have turned to despair as bloodshed marked the start of spring months of winter warring.

A car bomb that killed 78 people in a busy market in the town of Zakho last week sent shockwaves reverberating through the region.

The parliament building in Erbil, once the proud symbol of a fledgling democracy, has been abandoned but for a hard core of MPs who have been staging an open-ended sit-in.

The assembly's president, Jawar Namek, told AFP: "We want the war between the parties to stop so the government can resunfe its work."

The Iraqi Kurds have controlled northern Iraq in defiance of Baghdad since the 1991 Gulf war and held elections which resulted in a failed power sharing arrangement between the two main parties.

The feuding sides, Massud Barzani's Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) and Jalal Talabani's Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK), have been locked in a virtual all-out war since last May in a conflict which has claimed 2,000 lives.

The KDP, which controls Zakho, accused Mr. Talabani of personally ordering last Monday's car bombing in a bid to disrupt lucrative trade with Turkey through the border town. The PUK rejected the charge and said it was the Iraqi government.

Staff from foreign aid organisations have been at a loss to explain the attack.

They find it hard to believe that the PUK would commit such an attack against its own people.

But on the other hand, "it doesn't make sense that (Iraqi President) Saddam Hussein would want to frighten Zakho's people and the Turkish lorry drivers who take petrol from Iraqi-controlled Kirkuk to Turkey, thereby undermining international sanctions on Iraq," a member of a foreign NGO said.

Perhaps the only thing the two rival factions agree on is that there will be more of the same.

"There will be other attacks in Erbil (controlled by the PUK) and other towns, all carried out by the Iraqi agents," Kamal Fuad, member of the PUK's leadership, told AFP.

The last big battle between the KDP and PUK took place on the night of Feb. 25 in Kasnezan, a suburb northeast of PUK-controlled Erbil.

More than 100 militia died and more than 50 were injured, according to independent sources.

A high-ranking U.N. official who did not want to be named said that the PUK had unsucessfully attacked KDP forces ringing Erbil.

Trying to salvage peace from the mess is Ahmad Chalabi, head of the Iraqi National Congress (INC), an opposition umbrella organisation.

"The situation looks like it is at a standstill, but it isn't," he said. "I'm hopeful of brokering a lasting agreement."

But Mr. Chalabi, who has acted as mediator since clashes erupted last May, conceded that no new meetings are planned.

A senior U.N. official said: "The Kurdish parties are burnt out."

"Therefore they may stop fighting each other. But the Kurdish experiment of democracy has definitely failed."

It all spells gloom for ordinary people at a time of year when Kurds usually revel in the end of the rigours of winter and welcome the optimism heralded by spring.

Life in Erbil appears to go on as normal but under the surface there is a deep depression and bitterness.

In the 12-storey high Sheraton Hotel, the highest building in the town which was used by a KDP-TV-station, not a single window remains.

Last week about 20 men laboured on the roof removing steel rods from the concrete — a tonne of steel sells for 150,000 Iraqi dinars ($3,000).

The only good news is that prices for food and other goods have remained relatively stable.

But shopper Amina Alikin said: "What kind of life is it if you always have to fear to go to the market?

"It really is desperate, nobody can guarantee security."

Kurds halt fighting

CAIRO (AP) — The two key Kurdish factions in northern Iraq have agreed to halt infighting to counter an anticipated military attack by Iraqi government forces, an opposition group said Monday. Opposition groups maintain the Iraqi army has been preparing an attack on the Kurdish zone. Other reports said the military was cracking down in Baghdad following a failed military coup aimed at overthrowing the government. Hamid Al Bayati, a senior official in the Iraqi National Council, said the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan and the Kurdish Democratic Party agreed over the weekend to "freeze" the fighting

U.S. lobbies Indonesia against Iraq; Suharto favours easing U.N. sanctions

JAKARTA (AFP) — An envoy of U.S. President Bill Clinton held talks Monday with Indonesian President Suharto on U.N. sanctions against Iraq and said it would be wrong to end the sanctions before Baghdad fully complied with U.N. resolutions.

"It would be a mistake to lift or ease the sanctions when they (Iraq) have not fully complied," U.S. Assistant Secretary of State Winston Lord told journalists after meeting Mr. Suharto.

Mr. Lord said he came as Mr. Clinton's emissary on the Iraq issue and had confined his discussion with Mr. Suharto to that topic. He said he had also transmitted Mr. Clinton's personal letter to Mr. Suharto.

Indonesia, currently one of the 10 non-permanent members of the U.N. Security Council, has supported easing U.N. sanctions on humanitarian grounds. The Security Council is due to discuss the sanctions on March 13.

Indonesian Foreign Minister Ali Alatas, who accompanied Mr. Lord to see Mr. Suharto, said after the meeting that Jakarta agreed with the U.S. that Iraq should fully comply with the U.N. resolutions before the sanctions could be eased or lifted.

"But, especially as head of the Non-Aligned Movement, the president voiced his concern about the humanitarian situation or conditions of the Iraqi people, especially women and children," Mr. Alatas said.

Mr. Alatas quoted Mr. Suharto as calling "for us to seek a way how the (U.N.) Security Council can show their sympathy to the sufferings of the people."

Mr. Lord said Washington was also concerned with the suffering of the Iraqi population under the U.N. sanctions but blamed the Iraqi government for not making use of provisions under the resolutions that could reduce such suffering.

Suharto

He said that under the provisions, the flow of medicine and food was permitted and Baghdad could also make use, albeit under strict monitoring, of oil exports receipts of about $1.6 billion to ease the plight of the population.

The United Nations Security Council imposed an economic embargo in 1990 following the Iraqi attack on neighbouring Kuwait.

Mr. Lord said Baghdad still needed to comply with many articles in the resolution, citing the return of Kuwaiti prisoners and those missing in action since the war, as well as of equipment and materials that had been taken from Kuwait during the invasion.

Mr. Lord arrived here Saturday after visiting South Korea, Mongolila, China and Japan.

Afghan forces assault Shiite enclave

By Peter Greste
Reuter

KABUL — Afghan government forces launched a dawn assault on an enclave held by Shiite Muslim militiamen in Kabul on Monday, hitting a Red Cross hospital and trapping 15 foreign relief workers, witnesses and aid officials said.

Government jet fighters screamed across the city, making more than a dozen bombing sorties against Shiite Hezb-i-Wahdat fighters in the southwestern Karte Seh district, who retaliated with a deafening barrage of anti-aircraft fire.

Gunners loyal to President Burhanuddin Rabbani poured rocket and artillery fire into the battered suburb from surrounding hills as the government began what a Defence Ministry spokesman said would be a fight to the finish.

"Government forces expect to fight until Hezb-i-Wahdat is defeated," he said. "We have taken a decision to clean out Hezb-i-Wahdat and we are starting house-to-house fighting."

Two rockets slammed into the red cross-supplied hospital at Karte Seh, wounding several local staff and forcing the operating theatre to close, an official of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) said.

Work on reinforcing the hospital roof with sandbags had been completed two days ago.

There was no word on casualties in Karte Seh, but government sources said four people were killed and 15 wounded when a rocket hit the Rabbani-held northwestern Khair Khana district.

The fighting trapped thousands of mainly Shiite civilians, along with 15 foreigners working for the church-based relief agency International Assistance Mission (IAM) in Karte Seh.

An IAM representative, Tom Little, said one IAM house had been hit but there had been no casualties.

The 15 foreigners — five Americans, four Britons, two Germans, a Canadian, a Finn, a Singaporean and a South African — were all sheltering in basements and cellars, he said.

The hospital and IAM houses are near the Karte Seh headquarters of Hezb-i-Wahdat leader Abdul Ali Mazari, an obvious target for pro-Rabbani gunners.

The intense fighting forced the United Nations to cancel two planned flights which were to have brought U.N. officials and Afghans involved in peace talks into Kabul on Monday.

Hezb-i-Wahdat was weakened last month when the emergent Islamic Taleban militia defeated their ally, the Hezb-i-Islami faction led by opposition leader Gulbuddin Hekmatyar.

Hezb-i-Islami's rout from its strongholds south of Kabul isolated the Shiite militia and deprived it of its main logistical and military support.

Mr. Little said it appeared unlikely that Karte Seh's defenders would surrender either to the government or to the Taleban.

"I don't think Hezb-i-Wahdat will quit," he said. "I'm afraid there will be house-to-house fighting."

The crash of rockets and artillery kept Kabul residents at home. Streets were deserted and markets shuttered, even in districts well away from Karte Seh.

A Pakistani newspaper on Monday quoted Mr. Mazari as saying pro-Rabbani forces were preparing to attack, but said they would be beaten off by his men, supported by about 1,000 Uzbek fighters loyal to northern General Abdul Rashid Dostum.

The Shiite faction is demanding a 25 per cent share of power in any future government and armed forces of Afghanistan.

Mr. Mazari said he did not fear an attack by the Taleban because the Islamic militia's main target for the moment was Mr. Rabbani and his top commander Ahmad Shah Masood.

Iran protested to Kabul last month about earlier attac on Hezb-i-Wahdat. The government rejected the protest, accusing Tehran of interference in internal Afghan affairs.

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel: 773111-19

PROGRAMME TWO

17:00 ..... Le Prince Et La Sirene
17:30 ..... Pyramide
18:00 ..... Le Feu de la Terre
19:00 ..... News in French
19:45 ..... Varieties
19:30 The Bold and the Beautiful
20:30 ..... Home Improvement
21:10 ..... The Nature of Things
22:00 ..... News in English
22:20 ..... Watergate

PRAYER TIMES

04:36 ..... Fajr
05:53 ..... *(Sunrise) Duha*
11:47 ..... Dhuhr
15:06 ..... 'Asr
17:41 ..... Maghreb
18:58 ..... 'Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church Swelfieh, Tel. 810740
Assemblies of God Church, Tel. 632785.
St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590.
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 637440.
De la Salle Church Tel. 661757
Terrasancta Church Tel: 622366
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 623541.
Anglican Church Tel. 630851. Tel. 628543.
Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771331.
Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 775261.
St. Ephraim Church Tel. 771751.
Amman International Church Tel. 652526.
Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel: 824328.
German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 684195
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints Tel. 654932
Church of Nazarene Tel.675691.
The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 811295.

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology.

Temperatures are expected to drop slightly with a chance of showers in the northern parts of the Kingdom. Skies will be partly cloudy and winds southwesterly moderate. In Aqaba, winds will be northerly moderate and seas calm.

Min./Max. temp.

Amman	10/19
Aqaba	15 / 24
Deserts	8/ 20
Jordan Valley	12 / 23

Yesterday's high temperatures: Amman 22, Aqaba 28. Humidity readings: Amman 16 per cent, Aqaba 30 per cent.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:

Dr. Yousef Naser	751144
Dr. Fakher Bilbeisi	663412
Dr. Abdul Hadi Tayim	620115
Dr. Khaldoun Asfour	699440
Firas pharmacy	661912
Ferdows pharmacy	778336
Al Asema pharmacy	637055
Nairoukh pharmacy	623672
Al Salam pharmacy	636730
Yacoub pharmacy	644945
Shmeisani pharmacy	637660
Nairouih pharmacy	623672
Najib pharmacy	847632

IRBID:

Dr. Mohammad Al Hilu	279773
Alquds pharmacy	(—)

ZARQA:

Dr. Walid Halasch	982799
Khalifeh pharmacy	985417

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre	637111
Civil Defence Department	661111
Civil Defence Immediate Rescue	630341
Civil Defence Emergency	199
Rescue Police	192, 621111, 637777
Fire Brigade	617101
Blood Bank	775121
Highway Police	843402
Traffic Police	896390
Public Security Department	630021
Hotel Complaints	605800
Price Complaints	661176
Water and Sewerage Complaints	897467
Amman Municipality Complaints	787111
Telephone Information (directory assistance)	121
Overseas Calls	010230
Central Amman Telephone Repairs	623101
Abdali Telephone Repairs	661101
Jordan Television	773111
Radio Jordan	774111
Water Authority	680100
Jordan Electricity Authority	815615
Electric Power Company	636381
RJ Flight Information	08-53200
Queen Alia Intl. Airport	08-53200

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:

Hussein Medical Centre	813813/32
Khalidi Maternity, J. Amn	644281/6
Akilch Maternity, J. Amn.	642441/2
Jabal Amman Maternity	642362
Malhas, J. Amman	636140
Palestine, Shmeisani	664171/4
Shmeisani Hospital	669131
University Hospital	845845
Al-Muasher Hospital	667227/9
The Islamic, Abdali	666127/37
Al-Ahli, Abdali	664164/6
Italian, Al-Muhajreen	777101/3
Al-Bashir, J. Ashrafieh	775111/26
Army, Marka	891611/15
Queen Alia Hospital	686100
Amal Hospital	674155

ZARQA:

Zarqa Govt. Hospital	(09)983323
Zarqa National Hospital	(09)900560
Ibn Sina Hospital	(09)986732
Al Hikma Modern Hospital	(09)990990

IRBID:

Princess Basma Hospital	(02)275555
Greek Catholic Hospital	(02)272275
Ibn Al Nafees Hospital	(02)247100

AQABA:

Princess Haya Hospital	(03)314111

FOR THE TRAVELLER

QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. (08153200-5, where it should always be verified.

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights (Terminal 1)

04:00 Jakarta, Kuala Lumpur (RJ)
07:30 ..... Damascus (RJ)
09:15 ..... Aqaba (RJ)
09:55 ..... Abu Dhabi (RJ)
09:55 ..... Muscat, Dubai (RJ)
10:15 ..... Doha, Bahrain (RJ)
16:35 ..... London (RJ)
16:45 ..... Frankfurt (RJ)
16:50 ..... Cairo (RJ)
17:30 ... Chicago, Amsterdam (RJ)

Other Flights (Terminal 2)

04:20 ..... Vienna (OS)
14:25 ..... Rome (AZ)
20:00 ..... Aden (DY)
20:20 ..... Beirut (ME)
23:20 ..... Amsterdam (KL)
23:50 ..... Bucharest (RO)

DEPARTURES

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights (Terminal 1)

07:00 ..... Aqaba (RJ)
08:15 Amsterdam, New York (RJ)
11:00 ..... Montreal, Toronto (RJ)
11:30 ..... Vienna, Brussels (RJ)
11:35 ..... Geneva, Madrid (RJ)
11:55 ..... Paris (RJ)
12:00 ..... London (RJ)
12:30 ..... Frankfurt, (RJ)
12:45 ..... Cairo (RJ)
20:05 ..... Larnaca (RJ)
20:30 ..... Jeddah (RJ)
21:25 ... Abu Dhabi, Dubai (RJ)
22:10 Kuala Lumpur, Singapore (RJ)

Other Flights (Terminal 2)

13:50 ..... Vienna (OS)
15:25 ..... Damascus (AZ)
21:00 ..... Aden (DY)
00:20 ..... Amsterdam (KL)
00:50 ..... Bucharest (RO)

HIJAZ RAILWAY TRAIN

Dep. Amman 8:00 every Monday
Arr. Damascus 5:00 p.m. every Monday
Dep. Damascus 7:30 a.m. every Sunday
Arr. Amman 5:00 p.m. every Sunday

MARKET PRICES

Upper/lower price in fils per kg.

Apple	700/ 500
Banana	680
Banana (Mukammar)	620
Cabbage	120 / 80
Carrot	160/80
Cauliflower	140/ 80
Cucumbers (large)	100 / 50
Cucumbers (small)	250 / 160
Eggplant	160/ 80
Garlic	1200/800
Green beans	320 / 220
Lemon	320 / 200
Marrow (large)	90 / 50
Marrow (small)	220 / 140
Onion (green)	280/ 160
Onion (dry)	360/ 240
Orange	450/350
Peas	800/ 450
Pepper (hot)	720 / 460
Pepper (sweet)	570 / 240
Potato	350/ 220
Radish	120 / 80
Spinach	140/ 60
String Beans	700 / 400
Tomato	180/90

Her Majesty Queen Noor Monday meets with British Ambassador to Jordan Peter Hinchcliff, British Council Director David Burton, National Music Conservatory Director Kifah Fakhoury and British senior diplomat James Watt at Al Ma'wa Palace (photo by George Crystal)

Queen becomes patron of Purcell Anniversary Fund

AMMAN (J.T.) — Her Majesty Queen Noor Monday accepted an invitation to become Patron of the Purcell Anniversary Fund, a music scholarship to promote young Jordanian musicians, a Royal Court statement said.

In marking the 300th anniversary of the death of the world renowned British composer of the early Baroque period, Henry Purcell — "who is most remembered for his more than 100 songs, the miniature opera Dido and Aeneas, and his incidental music to a version of William Shakespeare's Midsummer Night's Dream, called The Fairy Queen," — the first three scholarships will be presented by British Prime Minister John Major on March 15, during his coming visit to Jordan, the statement said.

According to the statement, Queen Noor, in a meeting at Al Ma'wa Palace with British Ambassador to Jordan Peter Hinchcliff, expressed great appreciation for the embassy's long-standing support to Jordanian cultural institutions and said it was a privilege to become Patron of this important project.

The fund, which was instituted by the British embassy in consultation with the Noor Al Hussein Foundation's National Music Conservatory, is one of many areas of cultural exchange and cooperation between Jordan and Britain.

It will be devoted primarily to music and may expand in the future to offer scholarships in the arts.

Financing will be provided by commercial sponsorship from British companies, and it is hoped that other British and Jordanian sources will also contribute at a later stage, the statement said.

The meeting was also attended by David Burton, director of the British Council, James Watt, the British ambassador's deputy and Kifah Fakhoury, director of the National Music Conservatory, according to the statement.

Ensour says U.S. cuts in debt relief could endanger peace process

AMMAN (J.T.) — Chairman of the Lower House of Parliament Foreign Affairs Committee Abdullah Ensour Monday criticised a decision made by the U.S. House of Representatives Appropriations Sub-committee to reduce President Bill Clinton's request for $275 million in outlays to allow the administration to write off upto $488 million of Jordan's debts to the U.S., saying it could endanger the peace process.

According to the Jordan News Agency, Petra, Mr. Ensour said that the appropriations sub-committee's decision had come as a surprise to Jordan and the Jordanian people who had placed trust in Washington's continued support for the peace process.

The House Appropriations Sub-committee announced its decision to decrease debt reduction and aid to the Kingdom to $50 million in the current fiscal year last Thursday.

After the signing of the Washington Declaration on July 25 last year, Mr. Clinton pledged to write-off Jordan's $702 million debt to the United States over the course of three years.

The first tranche of the cancellation, a sum of $220 million, was written off during fiscal 1994.

At the end of February, the Clinton administration proposed to Congress a measure that would allow it to write off $488 million of the Kingdom's debts to the U.S. in the 1995 fiscal year. This would have combined the two tranches originally scheduled for 1995 and 1996 financial years.

Rania Atalla, head of Jordan Information Bureau (JIB) in Washington, said at the time that the proposal was contained in a "Fiscal Year 1995 Supplemental" that the administration had presented to Congress.

Ms. Atalla added that the 1995 supplemental was not directly linked to American economic or military aid.

However, Mr. Ensour said that the sub-committee's decision was bound to endanger the peace process with further setbacks. It would also corroborate the stand of those in opposition to the peace process, specifically the Syrian, Lebanese and Palestinian tracks of negotiations, he said.

Failure on the part of major world powers to honour their responsibilities, Mr. Ensour said, did not augur well for the stability of the region nor for other parts of the world, and he added that it would also endanger the interests of all parties.

Abdullah Ensour

Reuter adds Jordanian officials said they would press U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher to honour a pledge to cancel Jordan's debt to the United States.

The writeoff had been seen as a key reward for making peace with Israel last October.

"We are diligently following up the matter through all channels," said a Jordanian official. "But things don't look good for us ... we feel somehow betrayed."

Jordanian officials said they would raise the issue when Mr. Christopher visits this week on a tour to try to revive deadlocked Middle East peace talks. King Hussein will do the same with President Bill Clinton when he visits Washington on March 27, they added.

"We were shocked by the decision made at a time when the peace process is standing at a crossroad: either a completion or a set back," Deputy Ensour said.

"This is contrary to what the peoples of the region had expected of U.S. credibility in support and sponsorship of peace," he said. "It only scored a point in favour of anti-peace process forces and those working to undermine it."

Even Israel has condemned the move to cut aid, warning that Washington could pay "a terrible price" if it did not help those involved in the peace process.

Mr. Clinton promised the debt write-off last July to encourage King Hussein to quickly negotiate the treaty ending a 46-year state of war with the Jewish state.

Officials said Mr. Clinton called the King last Thursday and promised to work to block the cut if it was passed by the entire House of Representatives.

But officials and ordinary Jordanians doubt his resolve to confront an increasingly isolationist Congress bent on cutting foreign aid.

Local newspapers, which also reflect popular anger at the U.S. failure to put pressure on Israel over deadlocked talks with Syria and Lebanon and troubled relations with Palestinians, are heaping criticism on the United States.

"The move has only raised feelings of discontent and surprise," said Al Dustour Arabic daily. "It is unjustified, harms American interests in the region and damages the peace process which it backs."

Criticism has reached a level unseen since the 1991 Gulf war. That bitterness had passed as relations improved on the strength of Amman's support for the U.S.-led peace talks.

Officials accuse Washington of cheating them by promising hefty increases in U.S. aid for making peace with Israel. They cite letters from Mr. Clinton, Mr. Christopher and committees in the previous Democrat-led Congress, although none specified the amount of aid.

In meetings with American officials they warn that popular support for the peace treaty is fading in the absence of any improvements in the daily lives of Jordanians.

TCC, Japanese firm sign accord on telephone exchange expansion

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Telecommunications Corporation (TCC) Monday signed an agreement with the Japanese firm of Nisho Awai to install and operate equipment for the expansion of the Abdali telephone exchange to create an additional 5,000 telephone lines.

TCC Director General Walid Dweik, who signed the contract with the Japanese firm, said that the expansion was essential to meet the growing demand for telephone services by residents living in areas covered by the Abdali exchange.

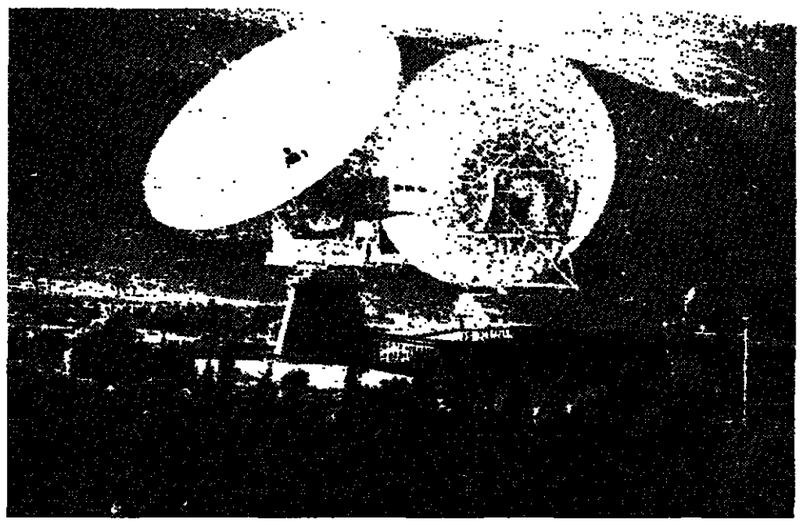
Minister of Post and Communications Jamal Saraireh, who attended the signing ceremony, said that the expansion project, which will cost JD851,500, is expected to be completed early next year.

According to Mr. Dweik, the TCC is currently building a main telephone exchange unit at Tlaa Al Ali, not far from the Jubilee roundabout.

The Tlaa Al Ali project, which is expected to be completed in one year, will provide 33,000 telephone lines, boosting the telephone services in western Amman regions.

At present, Mr. Dweik said, Greater Amman area has 10 main telephone exchange units: two each in Abdali, the downtown area, and Ashrafieh district, and one at each in Marka, Sweileh and Wadi Seer.

Once the Tlaa Al Ali exchange expansion project has been completed the TCC will have to transfer part of the Abdali exchange lines to the new facility, thus releasing an additional number of telephone lines for use at the Abdali exchange.



Communication satellite dishes in Baqaa (file photo)

Dispute over 'normalisation' hits Jordan Writers Association

By Sa'eda Kilani
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The Jordanian Writers Association (JWA), with a long history of internal conflicts, has now turned into a hotbed for clashes over normalisation of relations with Israel.

Its President Mu'nes Razzaz, has resigned in the ensuing row. Mr. Razzaz, who announced his intention to quit on Thursday, is expected to present his resignation to JWA council on Wednesday in protest against what he sees as the association's inefficiency and double-standard policies.

His resignation, which has already triggered major clashes and dissent within the association, was spurred by recurrent squabblings over an invitation of an Israeli-Arab Knesset member, Hashim Mahameed.

Mr. Razzaz said the stand of some members of JWA's administrative body in the Mahameed invitation was contradictory and confusing.

At the outset, Mr. Razzaz sent a reply letter to Asaad Abdul Rahman, director of Abdul Hameed Shoman Foundation, informing him of the association's objection to inviting the Knesset member to Jordan.

Mr. Razzaz said he and two other JWA administrative committee members decided to reject the invitation in compliance with one of the 12 resolutions taken by the association in August last year concerning the issue of normalisation, or normalising cultural ties with Israel. The JWA allows its members all kinds of contact with Israeli Arabs except with those who work in official Israeli bodies.

"He (Mahameed) is a freedom fighter but still, he is a member of the Israeli legislative authority," Mr. Razzaz said.

Some members of the JWA administrative body opposed this decision at the time and called for reconsideration.

Mu'nes Razzaz

"They play the role of hawks at one time and pretend to be the doves other times," he said.

Mr. Razzaz referred to another similar incident where the same members of the administrative committee took exactly an opposing stand to the same issue. "The same people who showed leniency towards Mr. Mahameed's visit were the same ones who openly criticised and attacked member Suleiman Al Azru'i, also an employee at the Ministry of Culture, because he participated in the opening ceremony of the northern crossing," he said.

"I refuse to continue with such an administrative committee," Mr. Razzaz said. "Not only it is incapable of performing its role properly," he said, "but it is engaged in a futile debate over normalisation."

"The issue of normalisation has consumed all our efforts and our time for a whole year," he added. "The association did not (devote) even one per cent of its efforts on cultural issues. I insist on my resignation."

A member of JWA's administrative body, Basma Nsour rejected Mr. Razzaz's accusations. She said that Mr. Razzaz was trying to make an issue out of his resignation while the main reason behind his withdrawal was health problems.

"He has the right to resign but without disparaging our reputation and our views," said Ms. Nsour.

Ms. Nsour said Mr. Razzaz should have taken the opinion of the administrative body before releasing news of his resignation to press.

"His resignation cannot be accepted without it being presented to and approved by the general assembly," Ms. Nsour said. "The way it was done is considered an insult to the association itself."

News of Mr. Razzaz's resignation first appeared in Al Dustour daily paper last Wednesday where he writes a daily column. He said he left a copy of his resignation at the association's office.

The administrative committee will meet tomorrow to discuss his resignation and probably call for an extraordinary session of the general assembly. There is no hope that Mr. Razzaz, who has a majority in the administrative body, will go back on his decision.

JWA sources believe that six out of 11 members of the administrative committee will also resign to give way for the election of a new body.

"I can't put up anymore with schizophrenic people," he said. "I'm also very sick and I need rest."

Mr. Razzaz, secretary general of the Jordanian Arab Democratic Party, won JWA presidency in February last year. Six leftist political parties raising the slogan of anti-normalisation, supported his candidacy.

HOME NEWS IN BRIEF

RSCN praises Aqaba drive to save corals

AMMAN (Petra) — President of the Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature Anis Muasher on Monday lauded efforts exerted by the concerned authorities in Aqaba city to protect marine life in the Gulf of Aqaba. Mr. Muasher said the decision taken recently by Aqaba Region Authority President Fayez Khasawneh, banning trading in coral reefs to protect marine life is worth praise. He said coral reefs in the Red Sea, and especially in the Jordanian area, have many distinct features and are characterised by their diversity. He said there are more than 100 kinds of coral reefs in the Aqaba Gulf with some of them existing very close to the surface and others existing in depths exceeding 100 metres. He attributed this diversification to the purity of water in the Gulf, noting that it can become a major attraction for divers around the world, especially those from European countries.

CAA initials accord for flights to Philippines

AMMAN (Petra) — Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) Director General Ahmad Jweiber Monday said that he initialled an agreement for regular air transport between the Philippines and Jordan during his visit to Manila. Speaking upon his return from the trip, Mr. Jweiber said another meeting by the civil aviation authorities in the two countries is to be held in Amman later this year to finalise the agreement.

Scattered showers expected today

AMMAN (Petra) — A drop in temperature and scattered showers today are expected in Amman and the northern regions of Jordan, according to the Department of Meteorology Monday. A department statement said the weather will improve Wednesday when a rise in temperature is expected.

UNRWA chief arrives for talks

AMMAN (Petra) — The Commissioner General of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), Ilter Türkmen Monday arrived in Amman to attend a meeting of UNRWA donor countries due to open Wednesday. The two-day meeting is expected to discuss the agency's programmes for the coming five years as well as the transfer of the agency's headquarters from Vienna to Gaza before the end of the year. Delegates from 20 countries in addition to Arab countries hosting refugees are to take part in the meeting.

Workshop on population awareness to open

AMMAN (Petra) — A national workshop on means of increasing public awareness of population issues Tuesday will open in Mafraq. Parliament Speaker Saad Srour will deputise for Her Royal Highness Princess Basma at the opening of the three-day meeting which is organised by the Queen Alia Fund for Social Development (QAF) in cooperation with the U.N. Fund for Population Activities. The workshop is being held to mark World Women's Day.

WHAT'S GOING ON

The following listings are compiled from monthly bulletins and the daily Arabic press. Readers are advised to verify the listed time and place with the concerned institutions.

NEWS

☆ ABC News Highlights and McNeil-Lehrer News Hour at the American Center at 5:00 p.m.

DIALOGUE

☆ Dialogue with Mr. Hassan Al Karmi entitled "A Love Story Related With Poems and Prose" at Darat Al Funun at 6:00 p.m.

POETRY RECITAL

☆ Poetry recital by Yousef Abu Loz at the Phoenix Gallery for Culture and Art at 6:00 p.m.

EXHIBITION

☆ "Young America" exhibit (with photographs featuring Americans of all ages) at the American Centre.

Under the Patronage of Her Majesty Queen Noor Al Hussein

Noor Al Hussein Foundation
The National Music Conservatory and THE CZECH EMBASSY
present

Prague Chamber Ballet

Saturday 11 and Sunday 12 March 1995 - 8:00 p.m.
The Royal Cultural Centre - Main Theatre

Ticket Price: JD 10

Tickets available from:
- Alahlia Abela Superstore, tel. 688481
- Babiche, tel. 661322
- Freddy for Music, tel 692696
- Music Box, tel 815745
- Philadelphia Hotel, tel. 607100
- Romero, tel. 644227
- The Royal Cultural Centre, tel. 661026
- The National Music Conservatory, tel 687620

مؤسسة نور الحسين
المعهد الوطني للموسيقى
و
السفارة التشيكية
يقدمان
فرقة باليه براغ
الساعة الثامنة من مساء يومي السبت والأحد الموافقين ١١ و ١٢/٣/١٩٩٥
المركز الثقافي الملكي – القاعة الرئيسة
البطاقة بـ ١٠ دنانير

ROYAL JORDANIAN
Volkswagen Group
Grand Travel
Abu Jabal Bros For Travel & Tourism

Hong Kong's pro-democracy parties sweep municipal polls

HONG KONG (Agencies) — Democracy parties beat off a strong challenge from pro-Beijing candidates to emerge victorious in Hong Kong's last municipal elections before the 1997 handover to China, voting returns showed Monday.

Sunday's elections were marked by a strong turnout, despite China's pledge to abolish all elected tiers of government set up by Britain at the end of its 150 years of colonial rule.

The Democratic Party, whose leaders were denounced by China as traitors in the aftermath of the 1989 Tiananmen killings, won 23 seats against eight taken by the main pro-Beijing party, the Democratic Alliance for the Betterment of Hong Kong (DAB).

"It shows China should listen more to the people of Hong Kong," said Democratic Party co-founder Szeto Wah after his win in a tough battle against long-serving Elsie Tu, one of the star opponents to democracy reforms.

For both sides, the elections were less about mundane municipal affairs such as garbage collection and public hygiene, than a dress rehearsal for September's Legislative Council elections to the highest of Hong Kong's three tiers of representative government.

China has pledged to abolish the new Legislative Council even before its scheduled five-year term has expired.

The turnout was about 40 per cent higher than in the previous municipal elections in 1991.

A smaller pro-democracy party, the Association for Democracy and People's Livelihood, which advocates a less confrontational attitude to China than the Democratic Party, won eight out of the nine seats it contested, giving a significant lead to the democracy camp.

Seven of the 59 constituencies were uncontested. Independents won the remaining seats.

Tsang Yok-Sing, leader of the DAB, described the result as satisfactory, although the party's share of the vote was little changed from its previous outing, last September's District Board elections.

The DAB was backed by China's many organisations in the British colony, including the Xinhua News Agency, China de facto embassy in the territory.

A splinter pro-Beijing party took four seats which bolstered the China camp's results.

Michael Degolyer, director of the Hong Kong's Transition Project at the Baptist University in Kowloon, said the result suggested growing public support for the more conciliatory pro-democracy line and a certain shrinking away from the polarised party platforms of the two main parties.

Mr. Tsang insisted the DAB's identification with China had not deterred voters.

"We have not found the so-called pro-Beijing label had affected the outcome," Mr. Tsang said.

But Mr. Degolyer said a series of public surveys by the 1997 Project found that many Hong Kong people wished they could have nothing to do with either Britain or China.

If they could have their wish, about 25 per cent would like an independent Hong Kong, he said.

Octagenarian Englishwoman Tu, formerly Elsie Elliott, who was supported by the pro-Beijing DAB, lost her urban Kowloon seat in an acrimonious battle against Mr. Szeto.

Mrs. Tu, a former missionary to China, had been Hong Kong's longest-serving councillor, first winning her seat in 1963.

She was a vocal opponent of the pro-democracy reforms, introduced by British Governor Chris Patten, which infuriated China and reduced Sino-British relations to the frostiest level in over a decade.

Mr. Patten said Monday that the Chinese government should do its share to cooperate with Britain in the run-up to the British colony's reversion to China in 1997.

"I very much hope that all of us can look forward to greater cooperation between Britain and China in the interrest of Hong Kong," Mr. Patten said. "That's what all of us want to see."

Mr. Patten, speaking to reporters, was responding to an appeal Sunday by Chinese Premier Li Peng, who called on Britain to cooperate with China over the colony's future.

In a speech at the annual National People's Congress, or parliament, which opened in Beijing Sunday, Mr. Li called on Britain "to carry out conscientiously the Sino-British Joint Declaration and cooperate with the Chinese government... for a smooth transition."

The Sino-British Joint Declaration of 1984 paved the way for China's takeover of Hong Kong in 1997.

"Of course, cooperation involves people grasping your hand when you put it out to them," Mr. Patten said.

"I trust that the prime minister's words will be reflected in actions and in the interest of the people of Hong Kong during the next two and a half years and beyond," Mr. Patten said.

"We're more likely to see it if we have positive and constructive cooperation from China," in the Sino-British Joint Liaison Group, which was set up to prepare Hong Kong's transition, he said.

For the past year, Sino-British political cooperation over Hong Kong has been stalled by democratic reforms in Hong Kong implemented by the governor.

Dynamite, not meteorite, causes Germany blast

ANDECHS, Germany — An explosion of soggy earth seen by a farmer in a swampy area by a lake was a planned dynamite blast and not a meteorite shower, embarassed police officials said Monday. A farmer said he heard a muffled bang and saw mud and water blown 150 metres into the air in this town southwest of Munich Saturday. Police were baffled by the origins of the 20-by-8 metre (65-by-25 foot) crater and concluded it was caused by space junk or a meteorite. The explosion was actually an authorised detonation of 100 kilogrammes (200 pounds) of dynamite to excavate a hole for a small wetlands reserve that a businessman is creating at the lake, police said Monday. "Unfortunately we didn't get the report until Monday morning," said police spokesman Max Enzbrunner, who had reported the believed meteorite impact the day before. Mr. Enzbrunner said state officials authorised the explosion and he didn't know why police weren't advised prior to it. The meteorite report Sunday caused a bit of an uproar in the rural Bavarian area. Radios reported receiving calls from listeners worried that Munich could be crushed by a meteor shower. The photograph shows local residents take a look at the crater (AFP photo)

21 killed in Karachi over holiday weekend

KARACHI, Pakistan (AP) — Snipers gunned down four men Monday and continued to terrorise a city that's had at least 21 killings in the past days, police said.

The latest sniper attacks and many of the weekend deaths appeared linked to a feud involving police and rival factions of the Mohajir Quami Movement, a militant political group that represents Muslims who have migrated to Pakistan from India.

The 21 deaths during the Friday-Monday period included four police officers, who have become regular targets.

A policeman and another man riding with him on a motorcycle were fatally shot Monday as they drove through the western part of the city police said. Two other men were killed by snipers in central Karachi, police added.

Moi wants refugees removed from Kenya

NAIROBI (AFP) — President Daniel Arap Moi has ordered the United Nations to remove an estimated 240,000 refugees from Kenya because it failed to extradite a Uganda-based Kenyan refugee accused of plotting against his government, local newspapers said Monday.

Kenya asked Uganda to extradite Brigadier John Odongo, accused by the Kenyan authorities last month of leading a rebel group known as the Feb. 18 Movement which aims to topple the government through guerrilla warfare.

Ugandan authorities detained Brig. Odongo and another Kenyan refugee, Patrick Wangamati, both registered as refugees in the Kampala office of the U.N. High Comissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), but said the two could not be extradited because Kenya did not produce evidence that they had committed crimes.

Uganda said it was looking for a third country willing to give asylum to the Kenyan refugees.

Mr. Moi told a public rally in the central Kiambu district Sunday that he was surprised that the UNHCR had given Brig. Udongo refugee status in Uganda.

"What did we do to him here to qualify for refugee status in Uganda," Mr. Moi wondered.

"Kenya can not continue harbouring refugees who have no respect for its laws. Let the Commissioner (UNHCR) get them shelter in another country," he added.

A UNHCR spokesman here said it was the responsibility of the Uganda legal system to determine whether Brig. Udongo was guilty of crimes against the Kenyan authorities and the agency could not interfere.

"Odongo has certain legal rights under the law... he has to go through the due process (of law)," said the spokesman Peter Kesler.

The majority of the refugees in Kenya are from neighbouring strife-torn Somalia. Others come from Sudan, Ethiopia and Rwanda.

Kenya has over the past three years repeatedly accused Somali refugees of engaging in banditry especially in the country's northeastern province and has on several occasions requested the UNHCR to repatriate them.

Moldova's Gagauz minority may back autonomy

CHIRSOVA, Moldova (R) — A poll among Moldova's Gagauz minority of Orthodox Christian Turks appeared to have backed the creation of an autonomous region within what used to be one of the most troubled former Soviet republics.

Officials organising Sunday's referendum in the south of Moldova, a republic of 4.3 million people sandwiched between Ukraine and Romania, reported a heavy turnout. Seventy-five per cent of voters cast ballots in three of five districts.

The Gagauz proclaimed their own republic in 1990 out of fear that they would face discrimination if Moldovan nationalists achieved unification with their ethnic kin in Romania.

Just after Soviet rule ended, several people were killed in clashes between Moldovan security forces and Gagauz activists.

But the violence was limited compared to the fighting in eastern Moldova's Dnestr region.

Zhirinovsky calls for 'one India,' flays Yeltsin

NEW DELHI (AFP) — Russian ultra-nationalist leader Vladimir Zhirinovsky kicked off a visit here Monday with a controversial call on India to effectively annex Pakistan and Bangladesh.

"I am opposed to any artificial division of the country," he told reporters after meeting Vasanth Sathe, president of the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR), the host of Mr. Zhirinovsky's first visit to India.

"When I was born in 1946, there was only one India, no Pakistan," he said.

"In all conflicts between India and Pakistan, I have always been on the side of India," Mr. Zhirinovsky added. "I would like to see India become one again before I die."

He said he was not bothered by what Pakistan thought of this views. Pakistan was formed in 1947 when the British divided India while granting independence to the sub-continent.

Mr. Zhirinovsky, who arrived late Sunday for a three-day visit, paid glowing tributes to India, a former close ally of the Soviet Union, and vowed to cement ties with New Delhi if voted to power.

He blamed President Boris Yeltsin for the mounting crime in Russia, and alleged that killing of popular Russian journalist Vladislav Listyev last week was part of a conspiracy engineered by Yeltsin supporters.

"We are very happy to be here," said Mr. Zhirinovsky, who is accompanied by five other MPs of his Liberal Democratic Party of Russia.

"India is the only country we have visited with maximum pleasure because there is not a single negative factor in relations between India and Russia," said the Russian politician whose extreme views have made him a pariah in some capitals.

"There can be some bad feelings about Germany or Japan among Russian children," he said. "But when it comes to India, you cannot find a single negative feeling."

"Unfortunately, ties (between New Delhi and Moscow) have decreased," since Mr. Yeltsin came to power after the break-up of the Soviet Union, he said. "It was a great mistake."

The Russian leader later told a delegation of Indian MPs that if his party came to power, "we shall supply all the armaments and military technology you need and shall build an atomic power station (in India) and a metro in Delhi."

Referring to the political turmoil back home, Mr. Zhirinovsky said: "It is a very difficult situation in Russia now. But in the next few years everything will calm down and Russia will restore its original position."

"Beginning with (former Soviet President Mikhail) Gorbachev, there have been too many traitors," he went on. "But we shall gradually overcome all this."

Mr. Zhirinovsky said growing crime in Russia was part of a conspiracy by Mr. Yeltsin's supporters to create "a tense atmosphere and say that Yeltsin alone was capable of fighting the threat from ultra-nationalist forces and fascism."

He said journalist Yeltsiv's murder had to be seen in this light.

Mr. Zhirinovsky received a statue of Buddha from his host Mr. Sathe and presented the latter with a bottle of vodka whose label bore the Russian politician's picture and name.

No meetings with Indian government leaders are scheduled during the visit, which ends Wednesday and includes a visit to the Taj Mahal in the northern town of Agra along with his wife.

Self-taught chef wins gastronomic accolade

PARIS — An unorthodox, self-taught chef from the French Alps who serves veal cooked with roast coffee has won the most prized distinction in French cuisine: a third star in the Michelion Guide to Fine Eating. Marc Veyrat, who runs the Auberge De L'Eridan in Annecy, southern France, become the 20th three-star restaurant in the venerable guide book, whose new edition came out Monday. "We only found out about it two days ago. We were thrilled. It's very good news," Veyrat's wife Valerie said Sunday. "My husband deserves it, and has worked very hard for this," she said in a telephone interview. "It's something for which all chefs strive. It's the crowning of his career." Mrs. Veyrat said she is bracing for the flood of reservations that traditionally accompany the announcement of a new three-star restaurant. Veyrat, 44, moved from the mountains of Savoy back to his birthplace of Annecy, at the foot of the Alps, in 1985, and to his new hotel-restaurant on the shores of Lake Annecy three years ago. In the picture dated Oct. 21, 1992, chef Veyrat poses in his restaurant kitchen in Veyrier-Du-Lac, on the edge of the lake near the town of Annecy (AFP photo)

Nigerian press say coup plot fails

LAGOS (R) — A plot to overthrow military ruler General Sani Abacha has been uncovered and at least 150 officers are held for questioning, Nigerian magazines reported Monday.

They said the most senior among those arrested was Brigadier-General Lawan Gwadabe, commander of the 23 Armoured Brigade in Yola, northern Nigeria.

"They were still hatching the plot before it was a foiled," the news magazine, an independent publication, reported.

"The pattern of arrest has sent shock and panic across major institutions like the command and staff college, Jaji, the 1st Mechanised Division Kaduna and the Nigerian Defence Academy also in Kaduna," it added.

The reports followed days of rumours in Nigeria of an aborted coup.

On this day, an independent weekly newspaper, said scores of officers were arrested for spreading rumours that Gen. Abacha's 15-month-old administration was too slow, citing failure to appoint ministers since Feb. 8 when he dissolved his cabinet.

Last week, defence headquarters spokesman Brigadier-General Fred Chijuka told reporters that some officers were being questioned for "rumour mongering," which Tell magazine called "a concealed term for coup d'etat."

Gen. Chijuka was not immediately available Monday to comment on the publications.

Gen. Gwadabe, 46, is a former state military governer.

Mexican rebels reject dialogue proposal

SAN CRISTOBAL DE LA CASAS, Mexico (AP) — Rebels in southern Mexico have rejected a proposal to restart peace talks that Congress is to debate Monday.

Leaders of the Zapatista National Liberation Army "reject the contents of the initiative, but salute the spirit of dialogue that animated it," Major Ana Maria and Commandantes David, Javier and Felipe wrote in the March 2 statement, released late Sunday.

The statement took offence at the bill's characterisation of the Zapatistas as a "group of dissenters" but did not indicate that the rebels intended to take any military action.

The Zapatistas rose up on New Year's Day 1994 to demand basic rights and services for the impoverished Indian peasants in Chiapas state. Despite a truce, peace talks to end the rebellion have produced no agreements.

The government, under pressure from foreign investors and hardliners within the governing party, cracked down on the rebels on Feb. 9 and issued arrest warrants against rebel leaders. The following day, President Ernest Zedillo sent thousands of troops into rebel territory.

The peace talks bill to be debated in Congress Monday would suspend the arrest warrants for 30 days and would establish neutral areas under government protection where rebel and government representatives could talk.

It would also create a new mediation commission and another commission to monitor compliance with peace accords to end the rebellion.

The rebels — who want the government to recognise them as a legitimate force of change — were miffed that the bill referred them in vague terms, such as "dissenting groups in Chiapas." It only used the Spanish-language acronym for the Zapatista National Liberation Army, EZLN, twice.

"The group that dissents from the policies of the bad government comprises millions of Mexicans of all social classes," the letter read.

"If the government wants to talk with the EZLN, it should recognise it for what it is, an organisation of Mexican citizens, mostly indigenous, who have taken up arms demanding democracy, liberty and justice," it said.

Rebels also criticised the measure for not forcing the army back to positions it held before troops rolled past the former demilitarised zone on Feb. 10.

The bill would also replace the Catholic Church-linked National Intermediation Commission — the only mediation body recognised by the rebels — with a new commission dominated by government representatives.

Although the rebels have not accepted the legitimacy of any other commission, they said in their letter that they "exhort those responsible to continue seeking mechanisms to renew the dialogue."

The church-linked commission is led by San Cristobal Bishop Samuel Ruiz, who has championed Indian rights in Chiapas for 35 years.

Angry ranchers and local business owners marched on San Cristobal's Baroque cathedral for the third Sunday in a row, demanding the ouster of the man they call "the red bishop."

With Mexico's stability at stake, President Zedillo has patched up a bitter feud with ex-President Carlos Salinas De Gortari but the rapprochement has one major snag — the continued detention of Mr. Salinas' brother Raul on murder charges.

Mr. Salinas called off a 44-hour hunger strike late Saturday as the Zedillo government bowed to his demand and officially cleared him of any cover-up in the murder last March of ruling party presidential candidate Luis Donaldo Colosio.

Mr. Salinas said the government also agreed to exonerate him over his handling of the economy, which Mr. Zedillo had said contributed to forcing his government to devalue the peso last Dec. 20, three weeks after Mr. Salinas left office. Mr. Salinas blames the devaluation on "errors" committed by the current government.

The public brawl between the two men which broke a long-standing tradition in Mexico that presidents and ex-presidents leave each other alone rattled confidence in the country's highest authorities.

Infighting in Mexico's ruling class had always been considered best kept behind closed doors, a formula that had helped keep the ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) in power for 66 years.

Mr. Zedillo's compromise with Mr. Salinas appeared aimed at taking the split out of the headlines. After quiet negotiations with Mr. Salinas Friday night, Mr. Zedillo sent an emissary Saturday to the impoverished neighbourhood in the northern city of Monterrey where Mr. Salinas had billeted himself during the fast.

Mr. Salinas said he was offered assurances his demands would be met. In turn he offered his support to Mr. Zedillo and ended his fast with a bowl of northern bean stew.

How much Mr. Zedillo needs Mr. Salinas is unclear but the hunger strike was an embarrassment to Mr. Zedillo and unnerved investors who pulled money out of Mexican markets last week.

It also exposed Mr. Salinas to ridicule. Many Mexicans felt it was more aimed at propping up the ex-president's battered ego than fighting for what Mr. Salinas called "the truth."

On Saturday the ruling PRI on its 66th birthday rallied behind Mr. Zedillo. "In his time (the PRI) was with Salinas," Gustavo Carvajal, a former PRI leader said. "Today, no. Today we're with Ernesto Zedillo."

Frenchman, Tha wife held over porno pictures

BANGKOK (AFP) — 83-year-old Frenchman his Thai wife were taken custody in the resort tow Pattaya for allegedly pro ing pornographic mate police said Sunday. In a police seized pornogra pictures, a camera and fi and sex aids in a hotel r and arrested Alexan Schap Oschnikoff and year-old Nueng-Ruethai mingkwan. Two Thai sch girls, sisters aged 15 and were also found in the r but were released after po lectured them on their w ward behaviour and c tacted their parents to p them up, police said.

Bison breakout bemuses Bavari bobbies

ERDING, Germany (AF — Three American bis that broke out of their encl sure at a farm in Bavaria ga police the runaround for hours before they were fina ly tracked down by helico ter, police said. The tri roamed throughout Frida night as local radio statio broadcast appeals for motor ists to be on the lookout fo the giant beasts. A motoris spotted two of them in bushe by the side of a motorway and the breeder, severa policemen and volunteers backed by a police helicop ter, managed to sedate them with a tranquiliser gun. The third was caught by the same means. All three were returned to their corrall. Bison are being bred in Europe as a low-cholesterol alternative to beef.

Dallas theatre linked with Oswald arrest burns

DALLAS (R) — The Cinema where Lee Harvey Oswald was arrested following the assassination of President John Kennedy in 1963 was destroyed by fire early Saturday morning, a fire early Saturday morning, a fire official said. Captain Don Benda of the Dallas Fire Department said it took 80 firefighters more than two hours to control the five-alarm blaze. He said it was too early to determine the cause of the fire, which started in the early morning hours. Benda said the theatre, which he believed was designated as a historic building, was still actively showing films. Oswald, described in an official government probe as Kennedy's assassin, was shot to death in police custody by a local nightclub owner two days after Kennedy's death on Nov. 22, 1963.

Rabbit kangaroo rediscovered in Australia

HAMBURG, Germany (AFP) — A species of Kangaroo believed extinct for 125 years has been discovered in Australia by a zoology student, the March issue of the magazine Geo reports. The article said the student, Elizabeth Sinclair, had been trying to catch a short-tailed kangaroo, but in the trap she set she discovered a pair of Gilbert's rabbit kangaroos (potorous gilberti), the last example of which had been seen in 1869. The animal is about the size and weight of a big rabbit, and resembles a rat because of its long, hairless tail, the report said. The article said that the female had young in its pouch, and that researchers had fitted the male of the pair with a transmitter and freed it to be able to follow its movements.

R.E.M. drummer recuperating from brain surgery

LAUSANNE, Switzerland (AP) — Rock drummer Bill Berry from the rock band R.E.M. is recovering well from brain surgery to stem a cerebal hemorrhage, the band's lawyer said. The 36-year-old co-founder of the acclaimed group collapsed Wednesday during a concert at Lausanne and underwent emergency surgery Friday to repair two aneurysms on the surface of the brain, one of which had ruptured. The operation at the University Hospital Centre of Vaud in Lausanne was entirely successful, surgeons said. "Bill is recuperating well after what was a serious operation," Downs told the Associated Press. The band's 1995 world tour, promoting its new album, Monster, has been billed in music circles as one of the year's most anticipated rock music events.

Mafia boss arrested in Italy

CATANIA, Sicily (AFP) — Venerando Christaldi, a suspected mafia boss and brother of Salvatore Christaldi, head of the criminal organisation's armed branch, was arrested Monday, police said.

Mr. Christaldi, 43, thought to be in charge of the Catania mafia's finances since its most senior figure Benedetto Santapaola was jailed, offered no resistance when he was arrested in bed in a country house 10 kilometres from Catania.

The operation came in the wake of the arrest three weeks ago of Giovanni Cannizzo, an apparently respectable businessman above all suspicion, who was stopped at the border with Switzerland carrying large sums of money.

Mr. Cannizzo, according to police, was preparing to launder up to $1 billion for the mafia.

The police, who said they would hold a press conference later Monday to give details on the latest arrest, have had important successes against the Catania mafia in recent weeks.

on Jan. 13 the head of the mafia in eastern Sicily, Eugenio Galea, was arrested.

Regional anti-mafia prosecutor Gabriele Alicata said Mr. Galea, 51, was in effect "foreign minister" for the Sicilian mafia organisation Cosa Nostra, charged with pulling the strings of their crime campaign in the east of the island.

Mr. Alicata said Mr. Galea's activities included the recycling of "dirty money" from illegal transactions covering drug-running, racketeering, gunruning and illegal property speculation.

Meanwhile, in an interview with the Italian leftist newspaper La Repubblica Monday, the country's most celebrated mafia turncoat, Tommaso Buscetta, said the state was not determined enough to completely destroy the Cosa Nostra.

Mr. Buscetta, who lives under close police guard usually abroad, told La Repubblica that the Sicilian mafia was in deep trouble following the jailing of its leader Toto Riina and other senior aides thanks to the testimony of informers, unimaginable a few years ago.

"Now is perhaps the moment, or rather should be the best moment to deliver the final blow. But I have learnt during my stay in Italy, which is happily coming to an end, nobody wants to administer this final blow," he said.

"There is a great desire to forget, to go back to the past as if nothing had happened, as if the sacrifice of so many people meant nothing," he added.

Mr. Buscetta began informing on the Cosa Nostra in 1986, enabling Italy's most renowned anti-mafia Judge Giovanni Falcone to understand for the first time the internal structure of the mafia and the key role of its leader Riina. Judge Falcone was assassinated in 1992.

"It seems to be that the State is no longer as determined after the death of Falcone and Paolo Borsellino (another anti-mafia judge). There is no longer that conviction which made everyone think that the Cosa Nostra could finally be beaten," said Mr. Buscetta.

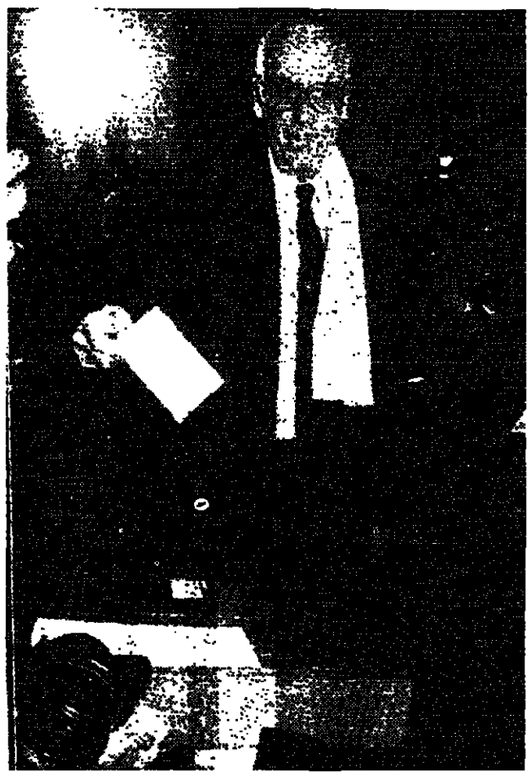
He added: "I am disgusted to hear now human rights activists defending people who are beasts, people who cut off the arms of a living boy before killing him saying he will no longer be able to take shots at Riina, beasts who would start up again immediately if they could."

Mr. Buscetta was interviewed to coincide with the screening by RAI, the Italian public television station, of a controversial new series on the mafia entitled The Octopus.

Right-wingers have called for the series to be banned because it gives a negative image of Italy.

Mr. Buscetta said the programme was unrealistic but served to remind Italians of the Cosa Nostra problem.

The fight against the mafia, which has reared its head again, was under strain Sunday as law enforcement officials accused the mayor of Sicily's main city of provoking the suicide of a policeman who investigated the mob.



Estonian President Lennart Meri casts his ballot in a polling station in the residential Nomme district of the capital during general elections. Estonians turned out in force for elections (AFP photo)

More cautious reformers win power in Estonia

TALLINN (AP) — Youthful liberals who had earned Estonia a reputation for radical reforms were swept out of office by more cautious politicians, results from parliamentary elections showed Monday.

A mixture of former low-ranking Communists, technocrats and farm leaders from the allied Coalition Party and Rural Union won the bulk of seats in parliament and will now lead in forming a new government.

The Fatherland Party, which has dominated Estonia's reformist government for the past two years, was projected to share only seven of the parliament's 101 seats with its election bloc partner, the Estonian Independence Party.

As their triumph became clear, leaders from the centre-left parties insisted they would not stray off the reform path.

Tiit Vahi, the coalition party leader and the man pegged to be the next prime minister, lashed out at opponents for trying to depict him and his allies as Communists who are opposed to reform.

"Even in Estonia there are artists who like to paint pictures that don't coincide with reality," Mr. Vahi told a news conference early Monday morning after preliminary results were released.

Mr. Vahi reiterated earlier statements that he was committed to a free market, but wanted to put a stronger, German-styled social safety net in place.

The results showed that Estonia seems to fit a pattern set in Poland and Hungary of reforms followed by defeat for the reformers.

"The lesson from elections like this is that there's never a big window of opportunity for reform in ex-Communist nations," said Vello Pettai, a Tallinn-based political scientist.

Critics say the centre-left leaders could bust the Estonian budget if they follow through on promises to increase pension payments or subsidise farmers hard-hit by recent reforms.

Others have expressed concern that if Estonia loses its reputation for bold, progressive reforms, it could lose its edge in attracting foreign investment.

As he cast his ballot Sunday, Estonian President Lennart Meri seemed to weigh in against any major shifts from the nation's long-standing economic and foreign policy.

"We made our historic decisions and mankind does not have a better option to offer," Mr. Meri told journalists.

Russia wants guarantees over NATO expansion

BRUSSELS (AFP) — Russia has called for the creation of a formal, permanent body for consultations with NATO, and set two conditions on the Atlantic alliance's eastward expansion, diplomatic and military sources said Monday.

Moscow has made its approval of the expansion — a process the West sees as inevitable — dependent on the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation giving a formal undertaking to not deploy additional nuclear weapons or troops on new members' territories, the sources said.

The three demands were made late February during talks in the United States between Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Georgy Mamedov and senior U.S. officials.

"Russia is seeking recognition of its special status and to be associated with NATO's decision-making process," said a European source close to NATO-Moscow negotiations.

"At bottom, Moscow is not completely opposed to the expansion of the alliance, provided this is not accompanied" by reinforcements of ground troops and nuclear arms, the source added.

Relations between NATO and Moscow have been frosty since December, when the alliance's foreign ministers called for a "how and why" study on admitting new members among former Soviet satellites, prompting Russia to pull out of signing two partnership agreements.

Diplomats, meanwhile, warned there was no question of NATO bowing to a Moscow "diktat," adding that it would be premature to take short-term decisions on defining relations between the two sides.

The creation of a permanent consultative body between NATO and Moscow was first mooted by Washington at the start of February, when Defence Secretary William Perry floated the idea of a bilateral committee for consultation on key defence matters.

But a diplomat noted that, while Washington envisaged a "fairly loose" arrangement, Moscow was calling for "a very formal structure."

Meanwhile, Russia's proposed restrictions on extra troop and arms deployments met with a cool response from NATO insiders.

"The integration of new countries in the alliance implies duties but also rights," said a diplomat, adding that there was no question "of ceding to external pressures or creating a Moscow directory."

That view was tempered by a high-level military official, who conceded that "nothing will happen without the Russians," and that some NATO countries — notably Germany — were more inclined than others to take a firm line with Moscow.

By way of a compromise solution, certain specialists have suggested granting some Central and Eastern European states NATO membership without giving them access to the alliance's integrated military structures — a role currently adopted by France and Spain.

But there were few signs the most likely candidates — notably the Czech Republican, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia — would accept such membership restrictions as they see the military guarantees that NATO can offer as the key reason for joining.

Meanwhile, within the next four months U.S. experts are to inspect all 55 strategic nuclear arms sites in Russia under the START 1 disarmament treaty, U.S. government officials said here Monday.

Barre exit boosts Balladur's campaign

PARIS (R) — French Prime Minister Edouard Balladur's flagging presidential campaign received a sorely needed boost Monday, seven weeks before the first ballot, when former Premier Raymond Barre announced he would not run.

Mr. Barre, 70, a pro-European economist seen as Mr. Balladur's most serious rival for centrist voters, said he did not wish "to complicate a complex and confused political situation."

"Since the conditions do not seem ripe at present for the implementation of the policy I believe necessary for France, I have decided not to be a candidate in the presidential election," he said in a brief statement.

Mr. Barre did not endorse any other candidate, but his decision was welcome news for the embattled Balladur, who has fallen behind fellow conservative Gaullist rival Jacques Chirac in the latest three opinion polls for the April 23 first ballot.

Ex-President Valery Giscard D'Estaing, another pro-European centrist, is expected to announce Tuesday whether he will now enter the race. But even if he does, political analysts see him as a less serious threat to Mr. Balladur.

Most leaders of Mr. Giscard D'Estaing's centre-right UDF party have pledged their support to Mr. Balladur and warned their mentor, who was president from 1974 to 1981, against what polls suggest would be a no-hope comeback bid.

Mr. Barre's announcement followed another weekend of public feuding between Balladur and Chirac supporters that has dented the prime minister's reputation for calm government.

In the most startling clash to date, Mr. Balladur disowned a Foreign Ministry announcement that due to budget cuts, 21 French diplomatic missions would have to be closed and programmes to promote the French language and culture curtailed.

A prominent Balladur supporter called for the dismissal of Foreign Minister Alain Juppe, Mr. Chirac's most senior cabient ally, although Mr. Balladur's campaign spokesman Nicolas Sarkozy ruled out such a move.

Sniping continued Monday with the Foreign Ministry saying it had not received a letter in which Mr. Balladur described the planned cuts as "without foundation" and questioned the motives behind their announcement.

With Mr. Chirac, twice defeated by Socialist President Francois Mitterrand in 1981 and 1988, now ahead of both Mr. Balladur and Socialist candidate Lionel Jospin, Barre's entry could have been fatal to the prime minister, splitting the centre-right vote.

A free-marketeering former European commissioner and a pillar of the international lecture circuit, Mr. Barre served as prime minister from 1976 to 1981, imposing austerity policies and pioneering economic liberalisation.

But he failed to reach the second-round run-off in a presidential bid in 1988. Most of his backers in that campaign now support Mr. Balladur.

Recent opinion polls credited Mr. Barre with up to eight per cent of the vote, whereas they suggest less than five per cent would back Mr. Giscard D'Estaing, 69.

The two centrist elder statesmen met twice last week to coordinate their positions, and Mr. Giscard D'Estaing has published a book entitled Five Years To The Year 2000 — The Stakes In The Presidential Election, a possible prelude to a bid.

Commentators are divided over whether Mr. Chirac's overtaking of Mr. Balladur in the polls is a turning-point in the campaign or just another episode in a volatile race where half the electorate remains undecided.

Seoul opposition barricades parliament

SEOUL (AFP) — South Korea's opposition MPs Monday barricaded the speakers of the National Assembly in their homes, whisked two lawmakers out of town and occupied the legislature to prevent the ruling party from ramming through changes to electoral law.

The main opposition Democratic Party (DP) held National Assembly Speaker Hwang Nak-Ju and Vice Speaker Lee Han-Dong in their houses, blocking them from presiding over the possible railroading, an AFP journalist on the scene said.

DP lawmakers and their assistants also occupied assembly conference halls, denying entry to ruling party members, using a tactic described in basketball terms by Yonhap News Agency as "man-to-man mark mingled with a zonal defence."

The opposition also "kidnapped" two key DLP members including Home Affairs Committee Chairman Kim Ki-Bae, bundled one into a car and the other into a plane and "took them to lunch" in their southern constituencies, an angry ruling party spokesman charged.

He said the DLP had called on police to ensure the safety of the pair, and, calling it "an unprecedented outrage," demanded their immediate release.

One of the two lawmakers confirmed in a phone call he had been taken onto a plane, had dined well on raw fish and was on his way home.

Kim Ki-Be called journalists on a car telephone and said he had been tricked into sharing the vehicle with his DP "kidnappers" — only to find himself on his way south. "Anyway I might as well eat dinner here," he said.

"Our party cannot but take these measures to foil attempts to railroad a bill to change the jointly-passed election law," DP spokesman Park Ji-Won told journalists.

"We'll unite strongly and prevent the railroading of the law at any cost," he added, referring to the ruling party tactic of using a majority to force bills through parliament by cutting off debate.

"This is an outrage, which is unthinkable in a democratic society," ruling Democratic Liberal Party (DLP) Chairman Lee Chun-Koo said, accusing the opposition of taking the assembly speakers hostage.

The DP, however, said it would continue the blocking actions until the current assembly session expires Wednesday.

The opposition has in the past occupied the assembly and grappled with rival lawmakers to prevent the ruling camp from passing bills.

But it was a first in South Korea's constitutional history that an assembly speaker has been held at his home, Yonhap said.

Speaker Hwang of the DLP was placed under tight surveillance at his residence in southern Seoul, where several DP lawmakers, helped by their chauffeurs, physically blocked Mr. Hwang's sedan from leaving its garage.

The bone of contention is the election law, which was passed jointly by the ruling and opposition parties a year ago.

The DLP wants to change the law so that candidates for mid-level administrators, including county and ward heads, must not belong to a political party, and that they have to be recommended by a set number of voters.

Russian forces bombard Chechen stronghold

ACHKHOI-MARTAN, Russia (Agencies) — Shells rained down Monday on the central Chechen town of Achkhoi-Martan as Russian forces dug in just outside the range of Chechen guns, apparently planning to soften up their target before advancing further on the town.

Russian tanks advanced Sunday to within two kilometres of Achkhoi-Martan amid intensive shelling of positions held by secessionist forces in the town of 20,000 people, which lies 40 kilometres southwest of the capital Grozny.

The Russians continued to pound the town and its civilian inhabitants Monday but made no further move, apparently preferring a strategy of attrition to wear down resistance while minimising losses in Russian ranks.

The Russian tactics are typical of the new strategy adopted since Russia's ill-fated New Year thrust into central Grozny. The Russian troops advance for a few kilometres on a town or village then dig in for several weeks of artillery bombardment with no real engagement with Chechen forces.

Sunday's bombardment on the centre of Achkhoi-Martan lasted all day and involved tanks, artillery, aircraft and helicopters. Hundreds, perhaps thousands of people fled along the roads leading eastward out of the town.

"They fired on us all night but they are not even looking to advance," said Vakha Meguiu, commander of forces loyal to separatist President Dzhokhar Dudayev. "Their tanks are staying just far enough way so that we can't reach them with our grenade launchers, and from there they can fire on us and the town at will."

On Monday, partly gutted and shell-damaged buildings were in evidence in all parts of Achkhoi-Martan, though it was hard to estimate civilian casualties.

In Achkhoi-Martan and nearby villages the list of civilian casualties gets longer daily and the graveyards expand.

Small groups of Chechen fighters, many without uniforms and most armed with little more than Kalashnikov assault rifles, scuttled between houses on the outskirts of town Monday, unable to see the Russian tanks bombarding them.

The Chechen fighters, who operate in small groups of eight or ten men with one or two grenade-launchers between, them, expressed determination to fight to the end.

"This is our village and I will keep fighting to my last bullet, and even when I have no bullets left," said Shirvan, 34.

About 60 Russian tanks and armoured vehicles have taken up positions outside the town after cutting off three roads to the west Sunday.

The offensive on Achkhoi-Martan has isolated the neighbouring towns of Samashky and Bamut, each about 10 kilometres away.

It has also cut off the last road to Nazran, capital of the neighbouring Republic of Ingushetia, for refugees who have been fleeing the conflict since Moscow's armed intervention in Chechenya began on Dec. 11.

In the surrounding area, Russian artillery continued to bombard Bamut Monday but Samashky appeared calm after an intensive barrage Sunday.

If the Russians take control of Achkoi-Martan, they will have completed a manoeuvre confining the secessionists to the east of the Caucasus region around the towns of Shali, Argun and Gudermes, which have been heavily shelled in the past few days.

Separatists charge that the Russians are now preparing an attack on that front, aiming to push the rebels back to the mountains of southern Chechenya. But the Russian military command in Chechenya quoted by the Interfax News Agency Monday said no decision had been taken on when to attack the rebel-held towns.

Meanwhile the head of the Russian administration in Chechenya, Nicolai Semyonov, was involved in a road accident Sunday in Grozny, according to military sources quoted by ITAR-TASS news agency.

Mr. Semyonov escaped unhurt, the news agency said, quoting Russian military authorities in the region.

Mr. Semyonov was driving in a column of armoured transport vehicles when his own vehicle, blinded by a cloud of dust, ploughed into the back of the vehicle in front, according to the sources cited by ITAR-TASS.

The Russian command at Mozdok in neighbouring North Ossetia said Mr. Semyonov was unscathed.

Meanwhile Moscow's war against the breakaway Chechen republic dominated voters' mood in Sunday's first multiparty parliament elections in Tatarstan, an oil-rich region in central Russia.

Local government officials fear that the conflict in Chechenya might give rise to nationalism in Russia's other Muslim republics, including their own.

Russia's handling of the crisis "has a greater effect on Tatarstan, compared to other regions, because of our common faith," said the republic's prime minister, Farid Mukhametshin.

Tatarstan has been an oasis of relative economic and political stability since the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. Its population of four million is equally divided between the Muslim Tatars and Slavs.

Only a handful of nationalists are expected to make it to Tatarstan's parliament, the 130 seat State Council. But the fear is there.

"The longer the conflict lasts, the more active the nationalist part of the republic's population becomes," Mr. Mukhametshin told the Associated Press.

"It is a very destabilising factor when coffins with the bodies of our young citizens keep arriving," he said.

Although Tatarstan and other Muslim regions have asked Moscow not to send their residents to Chechenya, the army has drafted conscripts without regard for their faith.

A total of 21 Tatar soldiers have died since the start of the conflict nearly three months ago, Mr. Mukhametshin said.

Nationalist leaders said Russia's inability to suppress Chechenya's drive for independence proves its weakness.

"We are not afraid of Russia even though it may undertake similar actions against us. But this will lead to Russia's defeat," said Amir Makhmutov, the chairman of Tatarstan's Sovereignty Committee.

"It (Russia) failed to defeat the tiny Chechen Republic. It will not be able to defeat such a big state as Tatarstan," he said.

So far, nationalist rallies have drawn only a few hundred participants as the majority of Tatarstan's population appears to support the government's cautious approach to relations with Moscow.

Bosnian Muslim rebels advance in Bihac

SARAJEVO (R) — Fighting flared Monday in the Bihac enclave of northwest Bosnia where rebel Muslim forces were capturing ground from Bosnian government troops, a United Nations spokesman said.

Rebel Muslims, backed up by Serb forces from neighbouring Croatia, appeared to have gained territory south and east of Velika Kladusa, Major Herve Gourmelon said.

Heavy shelling was reported early Monday, with scores of mortar, tank or artillery rounds landing in the area since midnight.

U.N. military observers reported movement of Krajina Serb troops on the confrontation line east of Kladusa over the weekend. The Serbs in Croatia have supported rebel Muslims with heavy weaponry, attacking over Bosnia's internationally recognised border with Croatia.

The Muslim-led Bosnian government army's 5th Corps is surrounded in the Bihac pocket by rebel Muslims loyal to local politician Fikret Abdic and allied Serb forces from Bosnia and Croatia.

Two tank rounds hit Bihac town, a U.N.-declared "safe area" in the south of the enclave, on Sunday afternoon, Maj. Gourmelon said. One round wounded two civilians and damaged building and nearby cars, he said.

Snipers shot dead one man and wounded two other civilians in Sarajevo Monday, hospital staff told Reuters.

Ramo Huskic 64, died after he was shot in the chest in the Sedrenik district of the besieged Bosnian capital, where a ceasefire has failed to halt a wave of sniping attacks.

Two others were shot by snipers in the same area. A 15-year-old boy was hit in the arm and sniper rounds struck a 54-year-old man in front of his house, hospital staff said.

In London, Bosnian Foreign Minister Irfan Ljubijankic said Monday there was a danger of all-out war in the former Yugoslav republic because of the diplomatic vacuum over peace proposals.

"As you know the clock is ticking," Mr. Ljubijankic, who is on a two-day visit to Britain, told reporters. "We are dangerously close to resumption of all-out war. At the moment we have a kind of diplomatic vacuum."

The Bosnian foreign minister was in London to discuss the international response to Serbian President Milosevic's refusal to recognise Croatia and Bosnia and to hold a summit with his Balkan counterparts.

European Union Foreign Ministers Monday increased pressure on Croatian President Franjo Tudjman to allow U.N. troops to remain in his country, linking the peacekeepers' presence to an EU aid package.

"The start of talks and their success depend on the readiness of Croatia to prolong the UNPROFOR mandate," German Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Werner Hoyer told reporters.

Mr. Tudjman has so far rebuffed the West's attempts to make him reconsider his decision not to extend the mandate for 12,000 U.N. Protection Force (UNPROFOR) peackeepers. He wants their pull-out from Croatian territory to start from March 31.

The EU's carrot-and-stick approach coincides with the visit to Zagreb of U.S. Secretary of State for East European Affairs Richard Holbrooke to try to persuade Mr. Tudjman that his actions risk starting a wider Balkan war.

Meanwhile, NATO and U.N. military officers say any withdrawal of United Nations peacekeeping troops from Bosnia would be a nasty and dangerous affairs.

"It's likely to be extremely difficult. It's likely to be bloody," said one U.N. source.

Military planners are studying worst-case scenarios for a potential U.N. withdrawal that conjure up nightmarish images:

— U.N. peacekeepers gunned down before reaching safety.

— Combatants taking U.N. soldiers hostage.

— Heavy civilian casualties from NATO air strikes.

— The U.N. leaving behind crowds of helpless women and children begging to be evacuated.

One NATO source said: "There are some people here who are eager for this to happen to show that NATO can handle it. But some of us think it's going to be a mess."

S. Korean reactor only choice for North — Kono

TOKYO (AFP) — The sole reactor on offer to North Korea, under the five-month-old agreement to eliminate Pyongyang's nuclear threat, will be a standard South Korean model, Japanese Foreign Minister Yohei Kono said Monday.

The nuclear Hobson's choice has been spelled out in a draft accord to set up the consortium that will supply the reactor, the Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organisation (KEDO), Mr. Kono told the Upper House Budget Committee.

North Korea has baulked at accepting a South Korean type. Moscow, Pyongyang's former cold war ally, has meanwhile offered its own model.

Mr. Kono said the draft accord stipulated that KEDO's goal was to provide North Korea with two light-water nuclear reactors of the standard South Korean type, with a capacity of about one million kilowatts, as well as transitional energy supplies.

In Seoul, South Korean Vice Foreign Minister Lee See-Young briefed journalists on the draft agreement to set up the consortium.

The accord will also clearly specify that South Korean firms will be the main reactor contractors, he said.

KEDO will have an executive board as its highest decision-making body, comprising three representatives, one each from South Korea, Japan and the United States, Mr. Lee said.

The three will elect a chairman to a two-year term, and all operational decisions will be made by consensus, he said. Decisions by the executive board will be carried out by the KEDO secretariat, comprising an executive director and two deputy executive directors.

The first executive director, also with a two-year tenure, will be an American official while his two deputies will come from South Korea and Japan.

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Right of words

THE COPENHAGEN conference on social development that kicked off Monday with an unprecedented number of heads of state expected to attend appears to be promising more biting than it can chew. By pledging to eradicate unemployment, poverty and social disequilibriums, the proposed declaration of the international summit seems to be running against international currents which call for balanced budgets and cutting down drastically on welfare, unemployment benefits and other social services. Many Western powers with the most to offer to achieve the goals and ideals of the Copenhagen gathering are already committed to balancing their budgets due to mushrooming economic constraints. We have seen the U.S., Canada and other industrial nations already reducing foreign aid to needy countries in order to make ends meet at home. It is thus hard to imagine how the objectives of the conference can materialise given the hard evidence against increasing financial and economic support to the underdeveloped countries. Of course this is not the first time that the international community has aimed for something that cannot get translated into deeds. Over the past three years or so the world has seen three other international conferences ranging from the Buenos Aires World Conference on Environment, to the Vienna gathering on human rights, to the Cairo meeting on population. They all have set high and idealistic criteria for the world to follow but unfortunately ended up doing very little to implement them.

The proliferation of international summits on a variety of issues needs to be reexamined against the backdrop of heightened expectations that seldom see the light of day. We believe that the poor countries will have to try to be more self-reliant while at the same time they keep up the pressure to win assistance from wherever they could in their campaigns to fight off socio-economic problems and backwardness. The underdeveloped nations of the world, it will be observed, continue to spend too much on armament, and white elephant projects that they can ill afford. But, in the same vein, those countries cannot give up the struggle to improve their lot, with or without support from the industrialised countries of the north. Ultimately a balance has to be found between the needs of the rich and poor of this world. The Copenhagen Summit would therefore do well to look for this balance before it can claim for itself the right to churn out more resolutions and words.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

A WRITER in Al Ra'i Monday levelled a scathing criticism at the U.S. administration and Congress for going back on their pledges to help Jordan financially and to write off debts due to the United States. Fahd Fanek said instead of increasing the amount of U.S. financial assistance to Jordan following its peace treaty with Israel, Washington has decided to reduce it drastically and also refused to write off the debts. This behaviour has dealt a very serious blow to the peace process at a time when the United States continues to brag about its determination to back peace moves and sponsor a peace settlement, continued the writer. The Jordanian people were appalled and shocked at this behaviour while those opposed to the peace process rejoiced over receiving yet another evidence about America's loss of credibility, he added. The writer warned that the Congress' move to reject President Clinton's pledge to write off Jordan's debts is bound not only to harm American-Jordanian relations but also America's status and credibility. If the Americans are behaving in this manner what could be expected from the Europeans who had been requested by Washington to write off Jordan's debts? asked the writer.

THE U.N.-sponsored world summit on social development in Copenhagen is a clear admittance on the part of the world community that the world is seriously plagued by social and economic problems, said Al Ra'i daily Monday. Issues like poverty, unemployment and family disintegration are threatening the advanced as well as the poor nations alike, and the time has come for the rich and the poor countries to pool their efforts to solve them, said the paper. The two world wars in addition to the cold war have left the world in a pitiable situation, with a serious gap and horrifying disparity between the rich and the poor and between the industrialised and the developing worlds, said the paper. The paper noted that unemployment and poverty and deprivation constitute a fertile ground for the emergence of terrorism, crime and other threats to the world community as a whole. It said there can be no alternative to a serious and prompt action at the international level to deal with this grave situation and end the threats posed to the world community at the threshold of the 21st century.

The View from Fourth Circle

By Rami G. Khouri

Global gods, guns and garbage cans

THE WORLD Summit for Social Development that convenes in Copenhagen this week is a difficult beast to grasp, because it tries to address so many massive human needs issues at one time. Yet, precisely because of its ambitious scope, this is probably potentially the most important of the several global gatherings that shall have been held in the period 1990-1995 (on issues such as the environment, human rights, population and development, children and women).

Social development conditions, or their absence, have emerged today as the main determinants of domestic political trends within and among countries. Dangers to national security and social stability rarely stem from ideologically or militarily threatening neighbours. The threats that scare today stem from the fear and desperation of individuals, families and entire communities that cannot assure their wellbeing in their own communities.

The three focal points of the Copenhagen summit — poverty, unemployment and social marginalisation — are the most dramatic symptoms of social development that has stalled societies that can no longer assure their members the minimum components of a dignified life. The result is a wide and expanding array of desperate, sometimes suicidal, acts that people turn to in their scramble to survive at any cost — such as crime, environmental degradation, illegal emigration, the production, trade and consumption of drugs, ethnic cleansing and killing, the proliferation of local gangs and international gangsterism, and international industries in sex, guns, babies, and human organs.

Most of these acts used to be committed by solitary individuals. Most of them are now undertaken by increasingly larger groups of people, often well organised into national and global networks. Many U.N. statements and documents about this world summit for social development already speak in the language of potential cataclysm and disaster — of mass despair leading to chaos and violence, of economies and countries collapsing, and of a world of violent mega-urban cultures alongside denuded, deserted rural landscapes.

We in the Arab World should take the opportunity of the interest and information generated by the Copenhagen summit to probe our own social development indicators and trends. The facts show the following picture in our region: a) economic pressures on individuals and families are increasing in all Arab countries, b) social tensions are rising because governments alone cannot protect the needy, and, c) traditional protective social structures (such as family, neighbourhood and tribe) are slowly weakening in the face of rapid urbanism.

I would point readers to two important reports that, taken together, provide a valuable yet sobering assessment of both global and regional trends.

A recent (1994) report by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA), entitled "The Impact of Crisis on the Social Situation in the ESCWA Region," points out the general decline that characterises most countries in this region. It shows that for virtually all ESCWA countries since 1980, gross national product growth rates have been very small or negative, population growth rates have outstripped per capita income increases in every country, and, except for two states, average per capita annual income growth rates were all negative.

ESCWA says "this points to severe — even disastrous — shortcomings in the development process, not withstanding the present income distribution patterns (among states within the region) which are completely skewed. These growth rate figures confirm that any fruits of the development effort did not reach the majority of the people, despite the huge amount of resources committed to the task."

The report also reviews or documents the imbalances between high military spending and more modest expenditures on health and education, the failure of "trickle down" economics, the emergence of massive and extensive unemployment and underemployment, the general failure of structural adjustment programmes to solve development problems, the severe constraints on development efforts due to debt and other fiscal problems, and the general deterioration in social sector indicators.

This sort of reporting and analysis, it seems to me, is one of the best things the U.N. system does, and we should acknowledge the importance of such dispassionate work, which will become increasingly important in the years ahead. Of course, many in our power structures and commercial elites will ignore or try to discredit such reports, most often by claining that they exaggerate existing difficulties. Those amongst us who are honest enough to face the realities of our world — the tens of thousands of bounced checks, the increasing scams and robberies, the collective humiliation of watching people methodically pick through our garbage cans every day — would do well to recognise that the whole world is talking in Copenhagen about the dangers of unmet social development needs because the whole world now look into the faces of want and fear in almost all of its cities and neighbourhoods.

We live in a moment — unprecedented in human history — when rich and poor countries alike are locked into a common momentum that is often driven by their fears and their deficiencies. Northern and southern cultures increasingly face common, even identical, problems of unemployment, poverty, homelessness, environmental protection, gender violence and gender equity, drug abuse, crime, and urban violence. Our worlds in the north and south are not as different as we once thought they were, or as they actually were several decades ago.

This is one of the points raised in a compelling new report by the International Commission on Peace and Food (one of whose members in Her Majesty Queen Noor), entitled "Uncommon Opportunities." The report suggests pioneering and dramatic new ways to address global issues of human want, especially the importance of shifting away from military spendind and instead promoting full employment and adequate food on a global basis. The report offers some fascinating and convincing suggestions for adopting new ways of thinking to meet human needs in the coming century, including a more democratic U.N. system.

One of the most interesting points the report made was the following: Our preoccupation with nuclear weapons has blinded us to the dangerous, destabilising threat at the other end of the weapons spectrum — the proliferation of small arms, and the deep linkages among small arms proliferation, the global drugs trade, and the scourage of terrorism. The report points out that endemic violence, social turbulence and economic distress today characterise both the rural southern regions of our world that produce and export drugs and the urban northern region of our world that consume and import drugs.

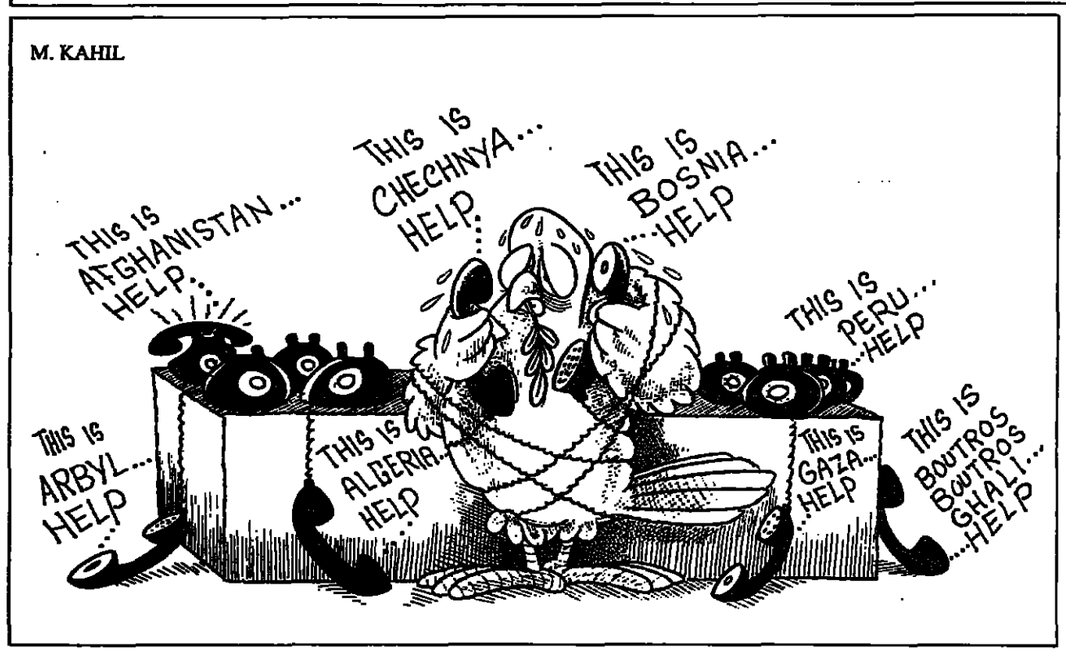
The fact is, the reason the entire world meets at Copenhagen this week is that, for example, the troubling phenomenon of children with guns disfigures violent urban landscapes in North America and violent urban landscapes in Africa and Asia alike. Mogadishu, Milwaukee and Manchester share a lot more these days than their first letters. Entire societies in both north and south seek comfort in ancient forces of exclusivist self-assertion — such as nationalism, ethnicity, and tribalism. Societies whose people suffer mass fears of social disequilibrium or economic denial turn to their gods and prophets for comfort, strength and hope; in north and south alike, they try even to conscript God into the business of politics.

The sobering new lesson we have learned in recent decades is that economic growth by itself is not a universal solution; our world sees wealth coexisting uncomfortably with increasing poverty and marginalisation, both within and among countries (the Middle East is a good example). The other side of this peculiar coin is that in many cultures and countries (such as in the Middle East) poverty alone is not necessarily politically destabilising; what is destabilising is the triad of economic inequity, social exclusion and the chronic abuse of political and military power.

The antidote to poverty, unemployment and social marginalisation will have to come from a combination of social, political, economic and environmental forces; and the primary momentum must come from individuals and communities at the grassroots level, rather than from governments whose insensitive policies, in most cases, got us into this mess.

Most people around the world view the Copenhagen summit as something far away, of concern to other people and other cultures. Well, what world history in the past two decades has taught us is very simple: There is no "other" any more. There is only our single world, with our common socio-economic problems — our children with guns, our adults with mobile telephones, and our one enormous garbage can into which we throw our trash, for others to salvage, to clean, perhaps to sell, sometimes even to eat.

M. KAHIL



Christopher to make first Mideast trip this year

By Patrick Worsnip
Reuter

WASHINGTON — U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher picks up the threads of his Middle East diplomacy this week with his first trip to the area in three months — a period which has seen the peace process stagnate.

Israel and Syria appear little if at all closer to a Golan Heights agreement, Israel's peace deal with the Palestinians is deadlocked over the continuing guerrilla threat, and even the Jewish state's accord with Jordan has run into problems.

In addition, Israel's relations with Egypt, a bedrock of Middle East peace hopes, have taken a turn for the worse due to differences over the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

Almost everyone agrees that time is getting short before the run-up to Israeli elections next year makes it harder for the ruling Labour Party to make concessions. If the hawkish Likud Party wins the elections, then all bets could be off.

But the United States has been unable to prod the parties into what Mr. Christopher calls the "tough decisions" needed to push the peace process forward.

Since a new Republican-dominated Congress took power at the beginning of January, threatening to sabotage much of the administration's foreign policy, Mr. Christopher has been busy testifying on Capitol Hill, with little time for trips.

This week's swing by Mr. Christopher, who is travelling despite a recent stomach ulcer problem, will be his first through the region since a perfunctory visit to Israel, Gaza and Syria in early December, which produced no real progress.

The delay has bothered many in the Middle East who see U.S. mediation as essential. "We can't afford too many repetitions of the last 10 weeks," one Israeli official said.

Mr. Christopher arrives in Cairo Wednesday at the start of a trip which will take him on to Israel, Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Syria. He will also see Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) chairman Yasser Arafat at his Gaza headquarters.

In Saudi Arabia, Mr. Christopher is expected to meet officials of several Gulf countries to discuss Washington's diplomatic offensive to maintain United Nations sanctions against Iraq without change.

But the main focus on the week-long tour will be on Arab-Israeli talks.

Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin said last Thursday he hoped the trip would lead to the resumption of direct contacts with Syria, broken off in December after Syria accused Israel of making "impossible demands" over the Golan Heights.

Earlier, U.S. television network CNN said the two countries were working on a proposal for a six-mile (10-km) demilitarised zone between them on the Israeli-occupied ridge.

Syria denied the report, while Mr. Rabin said it was partly true. In any case, both U.S. and Israeli officials say the two sides are still far apart on several key issues.

Syria has demanded Israel pledge a full withdrawal from the Golan, but Israel says it will negotiate the extent of a troop pull-back only when Syria agrees to full peace.

With Israel and the PLO, Mr. Christopher will be seeking to break a deadlock blocking the next phase of their 1993 peace deal — an Israeli troop pull-back in the West Bank and Palestinian elections.

Despite pledges by both sides to press ahead, Israel still complains that the PLO has not done enough to stop guerrilla groups striking deadly blows at Israel, while the PLO says Israel is not halting Jewish settlements in the West Bank.

Israeli officials said they would not be satisfied until the PLO had disarmed Hamas and Islamic Jihad — Gaza-based organisations opposed to peace with Israel — and put guerrillas on trial before a new security court it has set up.

A new dispute since Mr. Christopher was last in the region has pitted Israel against Egypt over the NPT, which Washington wants to see extended indefinitely at an April conference.

Egypt is campaigning against this because Israel, widely assumed to have nuclear weapons, has not signed the treaty.

"The negative atmosphere that has been coming out of the Egyptian-Israeli relationship... in the past few weeks has had a destabilising effect on the whole process," one Middle Eastern diplomat said.

Even Israel's peace agreement with Jordan last year has been hampered by a subcommittee vote in the U.S. Congress to cut U.S. debt forgiveness of Jordan — a key element in the deal — from $275 million this budget year to $50 million.

This has put Israel in the paradoxical situation of complaining about anti-Arab sentiment in the new Congress.

Jakarta no closer to solving East Timor headache

By Jeremy Wagstaff
Reuter

President Suharto

JAKARTA — Indonesia, into its 20th year of ruling a restive East Timor, appears no closer to solving the riddle of absorbing several hundred thousand impoverished but vocal Timorese apparently uncowed by years of coercion.

But when Australian Foreign Minister Gareth Evans recently blasted Indonesia's own description of East Timor's as a "pebble in the shoe," saying it was more like a "rock in the road," he was illustrating the scale of Jakarta's headache.

Now, academics say, the irony of commemorating 50 years of independence from Dutch colonial rule, alongside two decades of Indonesian colonialism in East Timor, may be too much for many to stomach.

"1995 could well be a watershed for the Timorese... Again and again Jakarta is being reminded that the Timor question is casting a shadow on the regime's international image," said James Dunn, Australia's former consul in Dili and author of a book on East Timor.

"Clearly some officials, especially in the Foreign Ministry, would like to give the issue a decent burial, even if it means making an embarassing concession," he added.

Diplomats confirm that the Foreign Ministry, which has borne the brunt of continued international concern, has pushed for Jakarta's mainly military authorities to ease up on its security apparatus in East Timor to allow greater self-rule.

This does not seem likely.

The Indonesia-appointed governor, Abilio Soares, has been summoned to Jakarta on a five-month course after seeking special status for East Timor, while locals report continuing harassment of opponents of Indonesian control.

This, they say, has varied from military linked gangs terrorising residents by night to the outright killing of six villagers in Liquiza in January, prompting Western embassies to express concern and send emissaries to the territory.

The military has launched its own inquiry into the killings but has denied any link with the so-called ninja gangs.

Academics and East Timor specialists say the incidents merely expose the depth of anti-Indonesian feeling which has, ironically, merely been fanned by Jakarta's expensive but futile efforts to win hearts and minds through public works.

Instead, splits within Indonesia's ranks over the handling of East Timor — mainly between the army and President Suharto — have further alienated the half-island's 800,000 people.

"All the incidents should be read first as reflections of East Timorese frustration. They have been marginalised completely in the economy and administration of their own land," said Gerry Van Klinken of Australia's Griffith University in Brisbane.

"Political games in Jakarta are played out on the backs of the East Timorese," he added.

Indonesia's recent heavy-handed tactics, diplomats say, may merely speed up a process of uniting disparate factions of East Timorese at home, abroad and in jail to push for a political solution that a few years ago seemed unthinkable.

But others say Mr. Suharto himself appears implacably opposed to any concession, and concede that granting independence to East Timor seems impossible whoever rules in Jakarta.

Instead, they say, East Timorese will continue to exploit Indonesia's efforts to present a sophisticated public front to remind the world of their plight and embarrass their overlords. And 1995 will offer plenty of such opportunities.

Amman hosts Arab-Israeli meeting

(Continued from page 1)

displaced because it is in the Israel-Palestinian agreement," Dr. Shaath said. "But we have become accustomed to Israeli procrastination in implementation... and I do not want to sound optimistic about the speed in implementation."

Earlier Monday, Dr. Shaath told the Voice of Palestine radio that a working paper prepared by the PLO, Jordan and Egypt to enable the return of the displaced would be presented at the Amman meeting.

"The issues we will look into are the steps, a timetable and the modalities for the priorities of return," Dr. Shaath told the radio.

According to Jordanian officials, the Israelis are expected to focus on paragraph 12 of the Israel-PLO agreement, which calls for cooperation between the four parties on resolving the issue rather than implementation of international law.

Israeli sources quoted by Israeli Television on Monday said that Mr. Peres will link the timetable for the return of the displaced to economic development and the building of the infrastructure in the West Bank and Gaza Strip needed to absorb them.

Jordan, Egypt and the PLO, on the other hand, will focus on the implementation of international law cited in the Palestinian-Israeli declaration of principles and the Jordan-Israeli peace treaty.

In addition, Jordan, according to officials, is also going to discuss the fate of those people who were outside the West Bank when it was occupied by Israel and were not allowed to return, 10,000 deportees from border villages, 1,300 political deportees, and Palestinians who were banned from returning to the territories because their Israeli-issued travel visas or residence permits had expired.

According to these officials, these cases number between 55,000 and 90,000 and Jordan would insist at the talks that they be allowed to return first.

Bar association defies directive

(Continued from page 1)

laws stated by the Constitution and the National Charter."

Minister Tel rejected any claims that his decision was politically motivated. He told the Jordan Times that, "according to me, there is no political reason" for this instruction. "All West Bank colleagues have no right to vote in Jordan because of the decision taken in 1988 of administrative separation."

"This is only for legality's sake," Mr. Tel said. "Everyone must abide by the law."

Mr. Nasser charged that the government was meddling with the affairs of the bar association in contravention of the associations' by-laws.

"This instruction is direct interference in our own bar affairs," Mr. Nasser said. "These colleagues are registered legally and they have paid their fees on time and in full — those who pay fees (nationality not withstanding) belong to (the JBA)," he told the Jordan Times.

Mr. Nasser said JBA laws allow any Arab to be a member of the Jordanian bar and also state that the bar has two centres — one in Amman and one in Jerusalem. "These articles are still valid," he said.

"From 1967 until now, these lawyers have practised without objection in the bar — some have even been members of the council," Mr. Nasser pointed out, adding that the rights and legal situation of the lawyers had been granted before Jordan severed legal and administrative ties with the West Bank and are therefore still preserved by the bar association law.

He continued that the minister, himself a member of the association, had circumvented legal means of excluding the West Bank lawyers from the elections. "In such a situation, he can appeal to the higher court for a decision on this matter, according to bar association laws," Mr. Nasser said. Article 107 of the bar association's law also allows for the cabinet, upon recommendation of the minister of justice, to dissolve the bar's council if the minister thinks the elections are invalid.

"His option is to dissolve us," Mr. Nasser said and "not to compel us to abide by this statement." Any move to dissolve a newly elected council would not come as a surprise to him, he said. Yes, of course there is a danger (of that happening)," he said.

Jordan urges summit to focus on NGOs

(Continued from page 1)

the summit of world leaders who have gathered for the first time to discuss social development as a policy objective.

"Over the last decade, the number of non-governmental organisations in both the developing and developed world has increased dramatically," she pointed out. "This demonstrates the important role non-governmental organisations are currently playing in people's lives.

"They are an independent 'voice' of the people, a vehicle for mass popular representation."

Princess Basma also noted that NGOs could act the medium between people and governments as well as world organisations such as the U.N. and were instrumental in mobilising public opinion on key issues.

"More imaginative methods are therefore required to expand the role of NGOs since they are the vital link between politicians, decision-makers and the grassroots," Princess Basma said.

Following are major excerpts from Princess Basma's address:

"Rarely has such an august and eminent group assembled to consider the human condition as at this summit. It is my hope that with so many of the world's leaders present, actions will be taken at the highest level of decision-making. We need dynamic, forward-looking strategies. We need innovative plans of action. We need political will to implement our plans, as well as a commitment to instigate appropriate follow-up mechanisms to assess the eventual impact of these plans. I hope this summit will act as a catalyst to mobilise our collective will for change.

It has been said that "where there is a will there is a way." A commitment to reduce and eventually to halt the ever-expanding investment in arms, will free those funds — totalling around $1 trillion annually — to be diverted to an investment in people. Then we will truly be putting people first.

Many of us working in grassroots development have concerns about the frameworks in which we have been operating until now. We believe the future of development lies in a shift of thinking. It lies in the adoption of a people-centred vision of development.

Experts in the past seem to have forgotten that the most effective policies are those which enable people to participate in the development of their communities as full partners, and not as recipients of top-down policy programmes. People are the world's principal players and also the world's principal resource. A lack of involvement on their part, particularly on the part of women, is a waste of valuable energy and resources. Full participation includes capacity and resource building, and the participation of people in the formulation and implementation of decisions that affect the well-being of local communities.

Progress at all levels of society cannot be achieved by governments alone. It is the efforts of men, women and children at community and village level which can bring about peace and social stability. No one nation, no single individual, no one organisation holds the key to the future.

As we consider our goals and strategies over the next few days, I would like to stress that social spending must be the last, and not the first area to be reduced in times of crisis; and over the long-term, ways should be found to increase investment in the social sector, nationally as well as internationally. Investment here refers not only to financial investment, but to the investment of time, resources and political will.

PNA police detain clerics

(Continued from page 1)

period, a Palestinian daily said Monday.

Ziad Jaber Mussallam, 28, from Talfit on the occupied West Bank, was accused of belonging to Hamas, and became the first to be held under the tougher measure, the daily Al Qods said.

The Israeli army said in February it would increase the renewable period of administrative detention to one year.

Since the 1967 Israeli occupation of the territories and throughout the seven-year Palestinian uprising suspects have been held without trial or charge but only for a six-month renewable period.

The measure applied by a military judge has been condemned by human rights organisations.

Arab-Israeli and left-wing deputies have petitioned Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin to protest any extension of administrative detention judging it to be "an excessive punishment."

It was part of the emergency laws applied during the British mandate over Palestine which Israel inherited when it was created in 1948.

In Tunis, the PLO's mainstream Fateh movement began a series of meetings of its leadership on the stalled peace talks with Israel without Mr. Arafat, PLO officials said on Monday.

A spokesman for PLO's Tunis-based political department said nine members of the 18-member Fateh central council attended the opening meeting on Sunday night which was chaired by the group's secretary-general, Farouk Kaddoumi.

In a statement, Hakam Balawi, PLO's ambassador in Tunis and a member of Fateh's council, said Sunday's meeting was informal and sought to prepare for an official meeting later this month.

But an official at Mr. Kaddoumi's office described the meeting as official and said "we keep in contact with the absentees."

Mr. Balawi said the official Fateh Central Council meeting, which was scheduled for March 3, was delayed because Mr. Arafat was to meet Israeli Foreign Minister Shimon Peres and U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher this week and then British Prime Minister John Major in mid-March.

PLO officials said Fateh council members Nabil Shaath, Ahmad Qouriea, and Intissar Al Wazir could not attend the Tunis meetings because of official engagements in Gaza.

Divisions appeared between PLO leaders in Tunis and in Gaza last month when members of the Tunis-group, Mr. Kaddoumi and Mahmoud Abbas, boycotted a PLO Executive Committee meeting in Cairo to assess the peace deal with Israel, saying it must be held in Tunis, technically still the PLO's headquarters.

Syria rejects Rabin call

(Continued from page 1)

never."

General elections are scheduled to take place in Israel by November 1996 and major concessions by the government have been ruled out as campaigning begins.

Syrian President Hafez Al Assad last week vowed that Syria would never sign a peace deal with Israel which was not in his country's interests.

Syrian Ambassador to Washington Walid Al Muallem told the Cairo daily Al Ahram that Damascus was hoping Mr. Christopher would obtain an Israeli agreement over the crucial issue of security arrangements.

Israeli, Palestinian unions sign agreement

(Continued from page 12)

the Palestinian unions would try to prevent would-be killers from entering Israel under the guise of workers.

But Mr. Saad complained about the closure of the Gaza Strip and West Bank after a bomb killed 21 Israelis on Jan. 22. The measure threw more than 50,000 Palestinians out of work, but Israel has in the last two weeks allowed up to 18,000 labourers to return to their jobs.

U.S. Marines at Mogadishu airport watch as looters take over an area of the airport March 1 after Pakistani U.N. troops evacuated the area. Pakistani peacekeepers left the seaport March 2 to end the U.N. mission in Somalia (AFP photo)

Somalia after U.N. — barbarism or new peace?

By Aidan Hartley
Reuter

MOGADISHU — The departure of United Nations troops from Somalia heralds either a dark age of stateless barbarism or a new opportunity for the clan leaders who destroyed the country to make peace their own way.

"I believe the withdrawal of the international community is already having an impact," U.N. Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM) special envoy Victor Gbeho said before leaving Mogadishu last week. "This may at the end of the day be the right tonic."

Prominent Somalis say that none of the clan factions which plunged the country into anarchy between the ouster of dictator Mohammad Siad Barre in January 1991 and the arrival of foreign troops the following year want to fight again.

"Nobody can benefit from this kind of anarchy," said Mohammad Nur Galal, a general who was a leader in the uprising against Siad Barre but then dropped out of clan politics. "The pressure for peace is coming from the population itself."

The U.N. failed to broker an accord between the clan militia leaders that would lead to the formation of an interim government, despite holding several conferences at great cost.

But while U.N. forces were in the country, farmers returned to their land, while trade and commerce revived because ports and airfields were allowed to function.

The provinces and small towns have now fallen under the authority of clan elders who have managed to cobble together an administration of sorts.

The capital Mogadishu remains tense — and it is the key to national peace as a multi-ethnic symbol of the state and the only acceptable government seat even after four years of chaos.

It is also economically important, since Mogadishu's sea port and airport are the main gateways to the outside world.

In the north of the capital, held by the Abgal clan faction leader Ali Mahdi Mohammad, a semblance of law and order has been imposed by Islamic sharia law.

Street lights illuminate this part of town and markets stay open late into the night because guns have been outlawed.

But cross into the southern-two-thirds of Mogadishu, and one enters a zone of darkness and gun rule.

This is the kingdom of Mohammad Farah Aideed, the most belligerent of the warlords during the civil war and the man whose Habre Gedir clan militias battled U.S.-led troops in 1993.

Many Somalis, even from within his own clan, now blame Gen. Aideed as the single greatest obstacle to peace because of his ambitions and his habit for settling disputes by the gun.

"I believe that if war is to be avoided and if peace is to prevail, this will not be the result of the endeavours of Aideed," Mr. Ali Mahdi told Reuters in a recent interview.

"It will be the desire of the growing number of people and forces working for peace," added the Abgal leader, who still calls himself president despite the fact that he controls a few streets of Mogadishu.

In the view of the Osman Hassan Ali Atto, a Habre Gedir and Gen. Aideed's former right hand man and financier, moves towards peace are being led by moderates in the factions.

Without naming Gen. Aideed, with whom he argued recently, Mr. Ali Atto said: "It's time for the hardliners to shape up, times have changed."

Gen. Aideed has been lying low for months since the failure of a conference of allies he organised in Mogadishu that would have made him president.

As the last U.S. marines and U.N. trops left over the weekend, Gen. Aideed bounced back into the public eye, saying he wanted to meet Mr. Ali Mahdi.

"There will not be any more civil war. There will be peace," Aideed said on Friday. He urged the international community on Sunday to return and help rebuild Somalia.

A crucial first step towards national reconciliation will be if Gen. Aideed and Ali Mahdi can agree to share control over the capital's port and airport, vacated by foreign troops.

If the militias fight, this could spark off a war in the capital that would destabilise clan home regions once more.

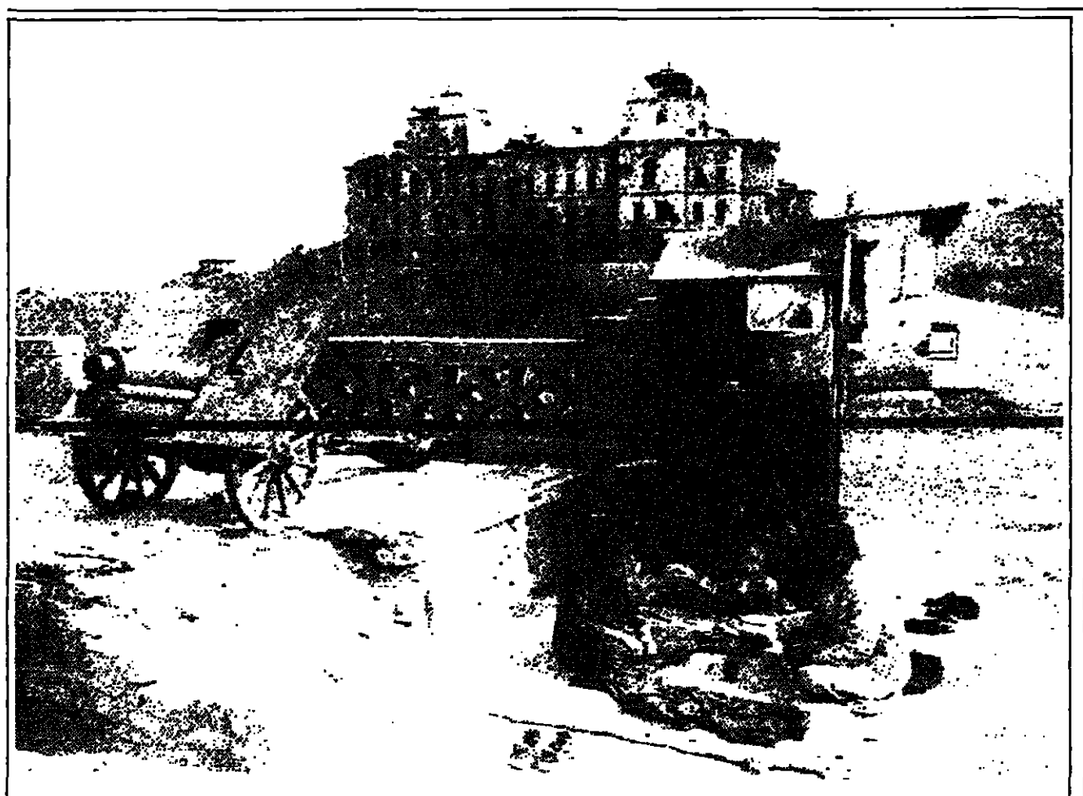
Gen. Aideed claims that he wants Abgal militias to occupy the port and airport alongside his own men, but the Habre Gedirs have already deployed 1,000 militiamen and their "technical" battle wagons — pick-up trucks mounted with heavy machineguns.

The militias are completely undisciplined, and pursue their own agenda of clan honour and revenge.

Small-scale but bloody feuds are therefore unlikely to end soon, making it a dangerous place for foreign aid agencies to work and preventing normalcy to return to the country.

Although U.N. and Western diplomats claim that they will not abandon efforts to broker peace, the departure of foreign troops signals a new isolation for the Somalis.

If they make peace, they will have to do it alone.



BOMB VICTIMS: Iraqi Kurds on Monday mourn at the graves of the victims of last week's carbomb blast in the northern Iraqi town of Zakho, following weeks of fighting between rival Kurdish leaders that left more than 80 people dead. Some 30,000 people attended the ceremony under heavy security measures (AFP photo)

Castro: More capitalism in Cuba 'inevitable'

HAVANA (AFP) — Cuba will inevitably resort to more capitalist reforms despite the injustices inherent in the market-based system, Cuban Fidel Castro told a gathering of the Cuban Women's Federation.

"Introducing elements of the market economy — of private property and capitalism — cannot be avoided," he said in an address quoted in the Cuban press Saturday. "We cannot give up foreign investment."

President Castro also confirmed that an increased number of people would be allowed to go into business for themselves in order to cut government employment rolls. About 160,000 people were allowed to become self-employed in September 1993.

"We must analyse the development possibilities of the small-and medium-sized industries and the role of the state in them," he said, hinting that the restructuring could go further.

"We are not going to create a capitalist society," he said. "Here revolutionaries are in power. This government in a government of workers for workers, even though there are some capitalists in it."

The Cuban leader said it was "inevitable" that some of the inequalities of capitalism would be introduced into Cuban society but that market-based reforms were needed to satisfy foreign investors and keep hard currency from tourists flowing into this Caribbean nation.

Aid groups plan for life after U.N. in Somalia

(Continued from page 12)

been successful in ending the famine caused by the strife.

"From a humanitarian perspective, the U.N. did absolutely the right thing by bringing those troops in December 1992," she said. "They restored order so that food could be delivered on a regular basis so the starvation could end."

"And today, in fact two years ago, the starvation had ended," Ms. Bertini said, noting that the most recent harvest was 90 per cent of the country's pre-famine level.

"After less than six months of U.N. peacekeeping involvement, we were not just giving away food to the most vulnerable, we were also giving food away for work."

She said that under the WFP's "Food for Work" programme, teachers, police officers and garbage collectors were being paid with food supplied by the agency.

Warring militias have kidnapped several aid workers and killed at least one. They have often used aid workers as shields or pawns in local disputes, or as resources to be pilleged.

Many Somalis have said the presence of aid agencies actually fuelled fighting, because they injected huge supplies and sums of cash onto the local economy which eventually found their way into the pockets of militia leaders.

Warlord Mohammad Farah Aideed on Sunday urged donors and relief workers to return, saying he was "ready to forget," past clashes with U.N. forces now that they had left.

U.N. launches offensive against world poverty

COPENHAGEN (R) — U.N. Secretary General Boutros Ghali opened the United Nations world summit for social development Monday with a plea to political leaders to take action against poverty and social injustice.

Opening what will be the biggest gathering of international leaders, Dr. Ghali said that extreme poverty, suffered by 1.3 billion people, was a direct cause of war and it was therefore in governments' own interest to care for their people.

"We know today that most of the armed conflicts with which the United Nations Organisation is faced are domestic conflicts. We also know that most of them have evident social and economic causes," he said in his keynote address.

"We must then state yet again the clear link between the promotion of development and the preservation of peace," he stressed.

"This Copenhagen world summit is part of a process... of profound reflection and debate on which the international community has embarked — about itself and its future, and about the role fo the individual human being," the U.N. chief said.

Despite the summit's lofty goals — eradication of world poverty and social injustice and a battle against unemployment — few expect the Copenhagen assembly to change the world.

An African delegate told Reuters: "Of course leaders throughout the world are not going to start being nice to everyone because Dr. Ghali says so, but these are still issues that must be addressed and any improvement, anywhere, that may result will make it worthwhile."

A poll published at the weekend in the Danish newspaper Politiken said that three out of four Danes doubted that the week-long summit, to be attended by some 120 heads of state or government, would achieve tangible results in bridging the gap between the world's haves and have-nots.

There are already disagreements between rich and poor countries at the summit itself.

The United States is opposed to a strong statement in favour of debt forgiveness which debtor countries want included in the summit resolution, delegates said.

Developing countries, in turn, are wary of enthusiastic Western declarations against child labour and for the right to form trade unions. Both, they say, are luxuries that some poor countries, struggling to survive, simply cannot afford at the current stage of their development.

Dr. Ghali said the debt issue was not one he expected to be settled speedily.

"It will take time, we need the mobilisation of the international community, these problems cannot be solved in a few months," he told a news conference after his speech.

But Danish Prime Minister Poul Nyrup Rasmuseen was keen to challenge the idea that what he called the "summit of hope" was just another U.N. talking-shop with little practical impact.

Just staging the event is costing Denmark $30 million, with the United Nations kicking in $3 million.

"At this summit we are discussing real problems, which concern all people. Therefore this summit is at the very heart of all political work and governanace, he told delegates.

"The U.N.'s job is to prevent the fatigue of public opinion and member states. The alternative, indifference, is morre dangerous," Dr. Ghali said.

Whatever the assembly's impact on world poverty, the economic effect of thousands of well-heeled civil servants, aid officials and journalists flooding into Copenhagen has not been lost on the city's pragmatic natives.

"I usually take Monday and Tuesday off but I'll work them this week, its a good chance to make money," a taxi driver said.

Yen rise may dent Japan recovery, force rates down

TOKYO (R) — The strong yen may lack some of the punch it once had for Japanese manufacturers, but it could still be enough to knock out the nation's feeble recovery, Japanese economists said Monday.

That prospect, combined with worries about the financial system due to banks' bad-debt burdens, could force the Bank of Japan (BOJ) to guide market interest rates lower and perhaps even cut its official lending rate, some economists added.

"The BOJ should change its macro-economic policy," said Masaru Yoshitomi, vice chairman of the Institute of Research and Consulting. "They can try reducing the overnight call rate and if that is not sufficient, then cut the discount rate. They are being pushed into that corner in the end."

The dollar plunged to a new global low of 92.70 yen in early Asian trade Monday despite central bank intervention to prop it up. Late in the day it was back at around 93.44 yen.

The dollar's latest slide has been greeted with less hoopla here than last June, when its first fall below 100 yen produced banner headlines. Some economists shrugged off the potential currency threat to the nation's long-awaited recovery.

"We haven't got an export-driven recovery, but a domestic demand-led recovery, so even with the yen at 90 (to the dollar) it doesn't mean the recovery will lose its crucial momentum," said Chris Calderwood, economist at Barclays de Zoete Wedd.

Others, however, were less sanguine.

"There is less overt hysteria about the yen's rise this time, but already many negative factors have piled up," said Johsen Takahashi, chief economist at Mistubishi Research Institute. "If the yen goes to 90 yen to the dollar, it could well be decisive for Japanese exporters."

"That could delay the recovery even more, and given the share price slide and worries about the financial system, the recovery may turn out to be an illusion," Mr. Takahashi said.

Japanese business Monday lamented the yen's rise and urged joint intervention and policy steps to defend the dollar.

"The current rise of the yen is well above appropriate levelss and exceeds the ability of (Japanese) corporations to cope. In addition, the speed of the rise is excessive," said Shoichiro Toyoda, chairman of business lobby Japan Federation of Economic Organisations (Keidanren), in a statement.

"It is desirable that not only Japan, but each country... take even stronger stances and respond with policy cooperation and joint itervention," Mr. Toyoda said.

Finance Minister Masayoshi Takemura also admitted that joint intervention alone had failed to stem the dollar's drop.

"Joint intervention does not seem to be immediately effective and leading nations need to discuss macro-economic policies," he was quoted as telling ruling coalition leaders.

Many exporters have made progress in coping with the yen's rise. But if recent gains are sustained, more efforts must be made to cut costs and shift production offshore — both negative for the economy in the short run, Japanese economists said.

Worse still, the yen's rise comes on top of fears that share prices will keep slipping and worries that some financial institutions will need official help to keep from going under due to their bad loans, they said.

Such aid could be politically tough to provide given the ongoing controversy over a scandal-tainted central bank-led bailout for two ill-managed and troubled credit firms.

"Even without the yen's further appreciation we have already had the problem exemplified by the two credit firms," Mr. Yoshitomi said.

EU politicians defend EMU plans after devaluations

BRUSSELS (R) — Leading European Union (EU) politicians began to fight for the life of the bloc's bruised plans to create a single currency Monday after the crisis devaluations of the Spanish peseta and Portuguese escudo.

The decision to devalue the peseta by seven per cent and the escudo by 3.5 per cent came after a marathon 11-hour emergency meeting of the EU's monetary committee which had been called by Spain following weeks of incessant pressure on its currency culminating in abortive Bank of Spain support buying on Friday.

It was the fourth devaluation of the peseta and the third of the escudo since September 1992 when what was to prove to be nearly a year of crisis in the European Monetary System's (EMS) exchange rate mechanism (ERM) first erupted.

"The measures underscore (our) readiness to make currency adjustments when necessary," German Finance Minister Theo Waigel said in Bonn. "This ensures the viability of the EMS for the future as well."

Luxembourg Foreign Minister Jacques Poos, in Brussels for a meeting with his EU counterparts, echoed the sentiments.

Asked as he arrived for the meeting if the devaluations would slow down the single currency process, Mr. Poos replied: "No."

"I do not think it should. Countries must go ahead with meeting the criteria," he said.

But while some economists began Monday reading the last rites for the single currency, other argued that the reverse could equally be true.

"There are some signs of adverse reactions to devaluations which could actually strengthen the will of those who haven't (devalued) to force the pace towards the single currency," economist Graham Bishop of Salomon Brothers in London said.

Spain's woes have been triggered by political instability which has raised doubts about its ability to take the steps necessary to get its economy in order on the way to the bloc's goal of creating a single currency within the next four years.

The country pledged to do whatever it had to in order to keep the budget deficit below 5.9 per cent of gross domestic product this year and 4.4 per cent in 1996.

Portugal, whose economy is closely linked to that of its Iberian neighbour, has also seen its currency suffer.

The strains in the currency grid — the vehicle supposed to carry the EU to its single money goal either in 1997 or by 1999 — have also been exacerbated by the flight of funds from the crisis-hit dollar into the safe-haven German mark.

Spanish Foreign Minister Javier Solana blamed the dollar for the peseta's problems. "We would like to see, after the measures we have adopted, the relationship of the dollar and the mark stabilised," he said.

In early trading Monday the peseta was quoted at 90.40 to the mark after closing on Friday at 88.44 and compared with its new ERM floor of 98.79. The escudo was at 104.95 against its floor of 119.03.

China predicts increased budget deficit amid financial woes

BEIJING (AFP) — China faces a "very serious" financial situation as a result of huge debts and a wastage of funds, a senior official said Monday as he predicted an increased budget deficit this year of 66.68 billion yuan ($7.8 billion).

The deficit, announced by Finance Minister Liu Zhongli in his annual budget speech to the National People's Congress (NPC), marks a 4.5 per cent increase on the actual 1994 figure.

Total state revenue will cost a 9.9 per cent increase from 1994 to 569.24 billion yuan this year, while expenditure is estimated at 635.92 billion yuan, up 9.3 per cent, Mr. Liu said.

In what one Western diplomat described as a "frank and sober" speech, Mr. Liu admitted that the country's financial situation remained "very serious," with lax budget restrictions resulting in massive wastage of state funds.

"Financial capacity has not increased substantially, huge debts have been incurred and our macro-regulating capacity is clearly insufficient," he said, adding that revenue levels showed wide regional disparities last year, with some areas unable to guarantee their payroll.

"Those contradictions are long-standing, so it will be hard to resolve them in a short period of time," he warned.

The minister especially targetted problems of tax revenue losses, which have "not been fundamentally resolved" since the introduction of sweeping fiscal reforms at the beginning of last year, including unification of the country's dual exchange rate.

"Serious", teething problems remain within the tax collection system, exacerbated by rampant tax evasion and fraud, Mr. Liu said, calling for a major crackdown in 1995.

Preliminary budget figures for 1994 showed a deficit of 63.8 billion yuan, with revenue rising 19.2 per cent from the previous year to 518.1 billion yuan, and expenditure up 25.4 per cent to 581.9 billion yuan.

National inflation last year stood at 21.7 per cent.

"The fact that inflation outstripped the revenue increase in 1994 shows that China has not achieved what it hoped for in real-term revenue increases following the tax reforms, and that was strongly reflected in Mr. Liu's speech," a Western diplomat said.

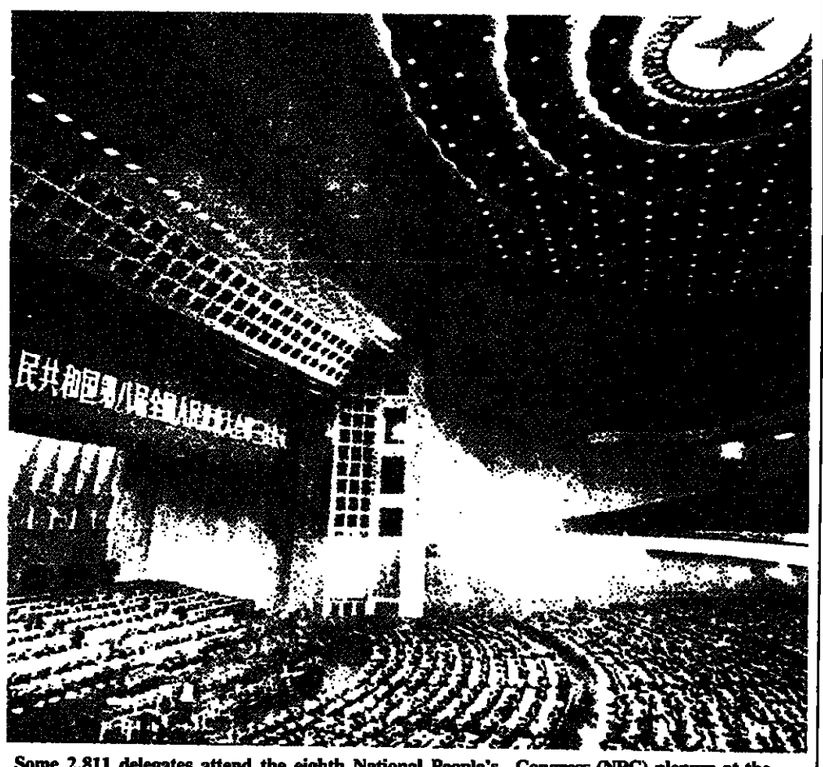
"The government clearly feels there is a lot more revenue to be garnered out there, but the moderate increase set for this year suggests they are realistic about the time it will take to strengthen control and collection systems," he added.

Mr. Liu said revenue increases this year would be limited because the 1994 rise — largely attributed to the collection of new value-added taxes linked to imports, and consumption taxes calculated according to the new exchange rate — would be part of the base number in 1995.

"The absolute amount of expenditures still exceeds revenue by a big margin and it will be hard to cut them down any further," Mr. Liu said, calling on all departments to exercise "thrift" and "plain living."

While describing Mr. Liu's budget figures as realistic, observers here pointed out that off-budget state expenditure in China was enormous, especially in terms of state bank loans to the loss-making state sector.

China's total domestic and foreign debt for 1995, including the deficit figure, will be 153.7 billion yuan — to be covered entirely by the sale of state treasury bonds.



Some 2,811 delegates attend the eighth National People's Congress (NPC) plenum at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing (AFP photo)

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR TUESDAY MARCH 7, 1995

By Thomas S. Pierson, Astrologer, Carroll Righter Foundation

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) Come to a better understanding this morning with associates for best results in the future. See good friends but avoid anyone who depresses you or who wants to drag you down.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) Any work you do should be done well today so that you please others and gain more benefits. Put more effort into having more accord with fellow associates.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) Make better arrangements for the days ahead so that you can cut down on general tensions. This evening is an especially happy one for finding relief.

MOON CHILDREN: (June 22 to July 21) Being particularly thoughtful of relatives brings more happiness into the home. Don't forget to pay your utilities today or other bills that are coming due.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) Meet with associates and figure out how to improve routines this morning. Visit friends or relatives and have a happy time on this prosperous day.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) Get several estimates before you go ahead with plans this morning for improving property. Don't permit some small problems to get you down in any way.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) Analyse yourself well this morning and concentrate on how to get to the top of your profession. Join in a group affair but be sure to pay your own expenses.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) You'll have to do some investigating to get the right answers to a confusing problem this morning. Show more affection to your mate. Forget the past and understand where you stand at present.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) Come to a better understanding with others who are important in your life this morning. Show some special thought that will be appreciated by all.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) Concentrate on highest ambitions and see those who can help you achieve them in the AM. Be wise in love matters towards your mate and towards your family as a whole.

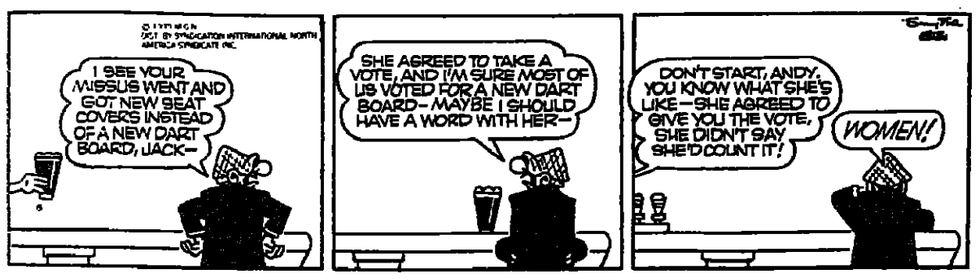
AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) You have some new ambition that requires know-how and suggestions from an expert, so go after it in the AM. Make travel plans wisely for a good time in the future.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) Be precise in handling practical matters and you make big headway today. Show others that you are up and doing and anxious for your own success.

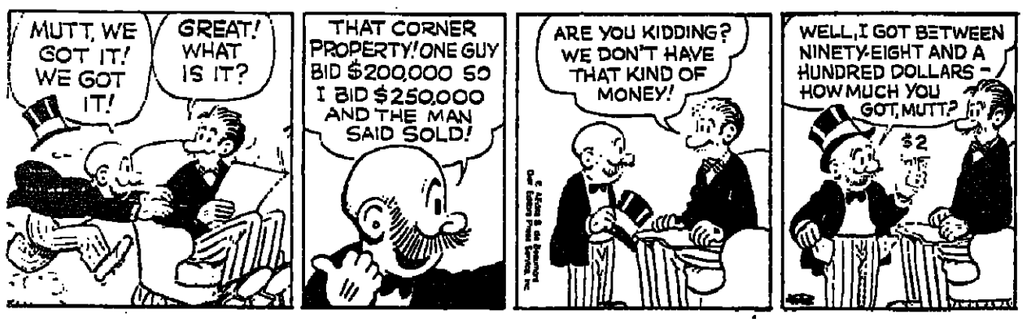
Birthstone of March: Aquamarine — Jasper

Peanuts

Andy Capp



Mutt'n'Jeff



THE BETTER HALF

By Glasbergen

"You always liked the way Elvis curled up his lip. I've learned how to do it even better!"

JUMBLE

THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME by Henri Arnold and Mike Argirion

Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words

SABSY

SYHIF

ELLAHT

MURQUO

Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

Answer here: A

(Answers tomorrow)

Saturday's Jumbles: TANGY KNACK DECADE GHETTO

Answer: What they considered the new organ grinder — AN AGENT OF "CHANGE"

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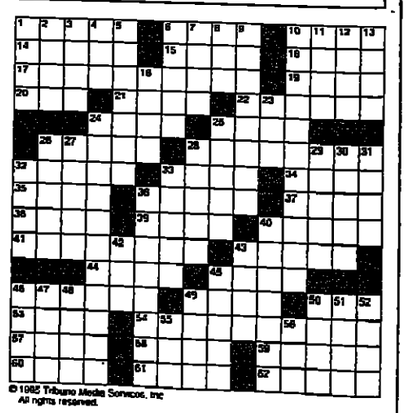
THE Daily Crossword by James Barrick



ACROSS
1 Courage
6 Over
10 Moran or Gray
14 Happen
15 Spear of old
16 "— but the brave..."
17 Extraordinary
19 Writer Vidal
20 Dawn goddess
21 Australasian parrot
22 Shoe
24 Supply with too many sweets
25 Self-satisfied
28 Expressed disapproval
28 Musical play
32 Mr. Bono
33 Partition
34 Poetic time
35 Touched ground
36 Flavoring plant
37 School jacket
38 Bowling alley
39 Leave
40 Rascal
41 Ouvors
43 Appellation
44 No —, no gain
45 Far from gentlemen
46 Tongue-lash
49 Mont
50 Feminine title
53 Song of a kind
54 Something inviting
57 Attic
58 Hideaway
59 Tibetan animal
60 Punta del —
61 Ms. James of song
62 Soak

DOWN
1 Comedian Bob
2 Repeal
3 Expert airmen
4 Operate
5 Streetcar
6 Relative of metonism
7 Lilliputian
8 River to the Volga
9 In wild haste
10 Appointments
11 Housetop
12 Concerning
13 At no time, to poets
18 Frame of mind
23 A possessive
24 Ponder
25 Divide
26 Clayey
27 Cat- — -tails
28 Fertile region
29 Complete
30 Treasure —
31 English queen
32 Seasoning
33 Pale
36 Minimize
40 Steals a child
42 Ewe call
43 Sour
45 Director Frank
46 Connecticut school
47 Desire personified
48 English elevator
49 Give off
50 Explosive device
51 Jockeyed
52 Crisp cookie
55 Corrode
56 Rai-a—

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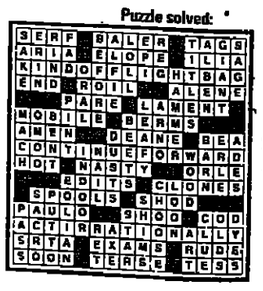
Puzzle solved:



Business Daily Beat

A review of economic news from the Arabic press

Jordanians rate unemployment, high prices as biggest headache

☆ A POLL conducted by a ivate centre on 1,085 rdanians from all parts of Kingdom revealed that 1 per cent of the sample unemployment and es as being the most im- tant issues that political sion-makers should ently tackle. The percen- s according to the regions e: 50.7 per cent in Am- and Madaba, 64.7 per in Zarqa and Mafraq, per cent in Irbid, Jerash Ajloun, and 64.7 per in Karak, Tafileh, Maan Aqaba. The percentage hose who saw administra- reform, agriculture and stment as priorities need- immediate action was 9. By region the percen- were 50.14 per cent in man and Madaba, 51.12 cent in Zarqa and Maf- 56.4 per cent in Irbid, sh and Ajloun, and 54.7 cent in Karak, Tafileh, n and Aqaba (Al Dus-).

UNDER AN agreement ed with the Telecom- nications Corporation, the nch company Alcatel will all and operate a com- nications exchange at Tla Ali that will serve the area addition to Dabouq, Bader Bassa areas. The turnkey ject will provide 30,000 phone lines in the area of Al Ali, 1,200 lines in bouq, 900 lines in Bader l another 900 in Bassa. cording to the agreement, e project will be put into rvice in the first quarter of 96 as the exchange should installed after 12 months om the date of the agree- ent.

As such, a large number of ubscribers connected to any f the exchanges at Abdali, weileh and Wadi Al Seer ill be transferred to the Tla l Ali exchange. This will rovide more lines to the ree areas mentioned above. he cost of the project is pproximately 56 million rench francs, to be covered y the current protocol igned with the French gov- rnment, and another JD .75 million to be paid by the ordanian government (Al Ra'i).

☆☆ THE ASSOCIATION of wners of clearing and for- warding companies submit- ed a memorandum to the inister of transport deman- ding a solution to the dispute with the Civil Aviation Au- thority (CAA) over the loca- tion given to clearing and forwarding companies at Queen Alia International Airport. Asserting that clear- ing companies have been suf- fering for many years from "moody" decisions by the CAA, the memorandum said the companies were being asked to move to new premis- es that are inadequate in many aspects in addition to being very costly "as if the person who decided the rent is living on the moon and not on the earth." The associa- tion charged that the CAA was dealing with the com- panies in an authoritarian and uncivilised manner (Al Dustour).

☆☆ AUTHORITIES have finalised the necessary stu- dies to transform the Jordan Electricity Authority (JEA) o a government-owned hareholding company which vould be responsible to enerate electric power and o build generating stations or public use. The new com- any will also take responsi- ility to transfer electric pow- r and to construct power nes in addition to managing e national grid which will e made available to other ompanies licensed to gener- te electric power. The dis- ibution will be the responsi- ility of the company holding e concession prior to the actment of the new elec- icity law which is currently eing discussed by the binet (Al Dustour).

Losses climb to $1.51 billion

Barings saved but pressure mounts for wider inquiry

LONDON (R) — Failed British investment bank Barings will live on within the Dutch ING group after a weekend deal, but pressure mounted Monday for a full inquiry to determine how the bank was brought to its knees.

Kenneth Clarke, Britain's chancellor of the exchequer or finance minister, has set up an inquiry under the Bank of England to investigate the collapse of Barings after losses run up by its financial markets trader Nick Leeson.

"It is eight days after this crash occurred and when we know the facts, then we will know whether the regulatory system needs improving or whether activities centred on one rogue trader could have frustrated any regulatory system," he told BBC radio.

But Alistair Darling, finance spokesman for the opposition Labour Party, said the central bank may have failed in its role as banking supervisor, and called for an independent inquiry.

"There is now quite a substantial body of evidence that suggests that not only Barings knew there was a problem but also that the supervisor (the Bank of England) ought to have known there was a problem," he said.

Evidence is mounting that Barings executives in London were aware of the potential for disaster in their Singapore office, where Mr. Leeson gambled billions of dollars on the future direction of the Tokyo stock market but got it catastrophically wrong.

The Financial Times reported Monday that senior Barings officials decided at a meeting on Jan. 26 — a month before the bank collapsed — that Mr. Leeson should cut his holdings of futures contracts "when possible." In fact, he increased them.

Singaporean officials disclosed Saturday that the bank was warned of potential disaster by the managing director of its Singapore operations as far back as 1992.

Mr. Leeson is now in prison in Frakfurt, where he was detained last Thursday after an international manhunt. He is fighting attempts by Singapore to extradite him on forgery charges.

Singapore's Business Times said Monday Mr. Leeson sent a fax to his bosses in the city-state on Feb. 24 saying he was close to a nervous breakdown and tendering his resignation, with apologies for "the predicament that I have left you in."

In London, his former colleagues were relieved by the weekend developments, but some doubt remained about whether all the bank's 4,000 employees around the world would keep their jobs. "Everyone's very happy at this stage but we don't know whether we'll be safe in our jobs," said one woman, entering Barings' headquarters in the city of London financial district.

At the regular morning briefing given to staff since the crisis began, a director gave an upbeat assessment of Barings' prospects within the ING group, according to someone who was present. "This is going to be the bank that reaches countries that other banks haven't heard of," the director said.

The giant Dutch banking and isnurance group is to pump £660 million ($1.06 billion) onto Barings, a sum the bank said would cover its losses and keep it in business.

"After restructuring and charging off loans the Barings group will have shareholders' funds of some £200 million ($322 million), which ING group is confident will prove adequate," a Barings spokesman said.

Some of the money will go towards paying the huge bonuses promised to Barings traders and executives only days before the bank failed, and some will ensure that depositors with Barings bank — including charities, local councils and Queen Elizabeth — will not lose any of their savings, as feared last week.

Meanwhile, the losses sustained by Barings in Asian financial markets are now £916 million ($1.51 billion), a lawyer fo the bank's administrators told a court Monday.

The figure has been fluctuating since the crisis began just over a week ago because of the difficulty of estimating losses on financial futures contracts that were still open.

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ORGANIZED MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR MONDAY 06/03/1995

COMPANY'S NAME	NO. OF SHARES TRADED	VALUE TRADED JD	PREV. CLOSING PRICE	CLOSING PRICE
JORDAN NATIONAL BANK	2803	12743	4.550	4.550
CAIRO AMMAN BANK	9000	44910	4.750	4.990
BANK OF JORDAN	300	1080	3.600	3.600
INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT BANK	1762	4856	2.750	2.740
THE HOUSING BANK	250	1523	6.120	6.090
JORDAN KUWAIT BANK	15800	47398	3.000	3.000
JORDAN GULF BANK	700	952	1.370	1.360
JORDAN ISLAMIC BANK	2258	8741	3.910	3.840
BUSINESS BANK	350	1225	3.500	3.500
BEIT ELMAL SAVING&INVESTMENT FOR HOUSING	50	160	3.200	3.200
AMMAN BANK FOR INVESTMENT	6150	7855	1.290	1.270
PHILADELPHIA INVESTMENT BANK.	2133	3010	1.440	1.410
BANKS SECTOR	41627	134757	INDEX NUMBER: 161.10 CHANGE	: -0.19%
JORDAN FRENCH INSURANCE	200	510	2.520	2.550
ARAB LIFE & ACCIDENT INSURANCE	2825	7345	2.600	2.600
DELTA INSURANCE	250	410	1.560	1.640
INSURANCE SECTOR	3275	8265	INDEX NUMBER: 137.21 CHANGE	: +0.14%
JORDANIAN ELECTRIC POWER	11200	17944	1.600	1.580
JORDANIAN ELECTRIC POWER /NEW	80418	124668	1.530	1.530
ARAB INTERNATIONAL HOTELS	1600	7696	4.900	4.810
JORDAN NATIONAL SHIPPING LINES	4500	15268	3.440	3.390
NATIONAL PORTFOLIO SECURITIES	650	1525	2.350	2.340
UNITED MIDDLE EAST & COMMODORE HOTELS	1600	3808	2.370	2.380
SERVICES SECTOR	99968	170908	INDEX NUMBER: 132.53 CHANGE	: -0.72%
JORDAN TOBACCO & CIGARETTES	200	6800	34.300	34.000
THE JORDAN CEMENT FACTORIES	8196	24725	3.020	3.020
JORDAN PETROLEUM REFINARY	216	2052	9.420	9.440
THE INDUSTRIAL COMMERCIAL & AGRICULTURAL	315	1228	3.900	3.900
THE JORDAN WORSTED MILLS	250	1900	7.650	7.600
ARAB PHARMACEUTICAL MANUFACTURING	7050	31821	4.650	4.420
THE JORDAN PIPES MANUFACTURING	400	1080	2.680	2.700
RAFIA INDUSTRIES	1000	2898	2.930	2.890
ARAB INVESTMENT & INERNATIONAL TRADE	1800	1728	.990	.960
ARAB ALUMINIUM INDUSTRY	100	675	6.700	6.750
LIVESTOCK & POULTRY	4750	3658	.790	.770
ARAB PAPER CONVERTING & TRADING	6600	9474	1.450	1.430
NATIONAL STEEL INDUSTRY	700	2765	4.000	3.950
JORDAN ROCKWOOL INDUSTRIES	1700	2166	1.320	1.280
JORDAN INDUSTRIES & MATCH/JIMCO	3250	2498	.780	.760
NATIONAL CABLE & WIRE MANUFACTURING	300	1424	4.750	4.740
JORDAN SULPHO-CHEMICALS	100	168	1.680	1.680
ARAB CENTER FOR PHARM. & CHEMICALS	500	1305	2.650	2.600
UNIVERSAL MODERN INDUSTRIES	1400	5868	4.130	4.190
JORDAN INDUSTRIAL RESOURCES CO.	150	318	2.130	2.120
INDUSTRIAL SECTOR	38977	104567	INDEX NUMBER: 123.39 CHANGE	: -0.35%
GRAND TOTAL	183847	418496	INDEX NUMBER: 143.49 CHANGE	: -0.27%

NO. OF TRADED SHARES IN PARALLEL MARKET : 84514
VALUE TRADED IN PARALLEL MARKET : 104219

Financial Markets — Jordan Times in co-operation with Cairo Amman Bank

U.S. Dollar in International Markets

Currency	New York Close Date 3/3/95	Tokyo Close Date 6/3/95
Sterling Pound*	1.6895	1.6530**
Deutsche Mark	1.4235	1.4023
Swiss Franc	1.2010	1.1735**
French Franc	5.0170	4.9535**
Japanese Yen	94.14	93.40
European Currency Unit	1.3050	1.3205**

* US$ Per STG
** European Opening @ 8.00 a.m. GMT

Eurocurrency Interest Rates — Date: 6/3/1995

Currency	1 MTH	3 MTHS	6 MTHS	12 MTHS
U.S. Dollar	5.87	6.00	6.25	6.62
Sterling Pound	6.17	6.37	6.75	7.43
Deutsche Mark	4.75	4.81	5.00	5.43
Swiss Franc	3.43	3.62	3.81	4.18
French Franc	6.43	6.56	6.68	6.93
Japanese Yen	2.06	2.06	2.06	2.12
European Currency Unit	6.19	6.31	6.56	7.00

Interbank bid rates for amounts exceeding U.S. Dollars 1,000,000 or equivalent.

Precious Metals — Date: 6/3/1995

Metal	USD/Oz	JD/Gm*	Metal	USD/Oz	JD/Gm
Gold	377.35	7.50	Silver	4.42	0.110

* 21 Karat

Central Bank of Jordan Exchange Rate Bulletin — Date: 6/3/1995

Currency	Bid	Offer
U.S. Dollar	0.6870	0.6890
Sterling Pound	1.1281	1.1337
Deutsche Mark	0.4897	0.4921
Swiss Franc	0.5851	0.5880
French Franc	0.1383	0.1390
Japanese Yen*	0.7347	0.7384
Dutch Guilder	0.4363	0.4385
Swedish Krona	*****	*****
Italian Lira*	0.0410	0.0412
Belgian Franc	******	******

* Per 100

Other Currencies — Date: 6/3/1995

Currency	Bid	Offer
Bahraini Dinar	1.8060	1.8200
Lebanese Lira*	0.041775	0.042635
Saudi Riyal	0.1829	0.1840
Kuwaiti Dinar	2.3100	2.3500
Qatari Riyal	0.1875	0.1887
Egyptian Pound	0.1850	0.2085
Omani Riyal	1.7760	1.7850
UAE Dirham	0.1865	0.1874
Greek Drachma*	0.2775	0.3155
Cyprint Pound	1.4425	1.5580

* Per 100

LONDON EXCHANGE RATES

LONDON (R) — Following are the buying and selling rates for leading world currencies and gold against the dollar at midsession on the London Foreign Exchange and bullion markets Monday.

U.S. $1.00 costs	1.4108/18	Canadian dollar
	1.4026/36	Deutschemarks
	1.5730/40	Dutch guilders
	1.1766/76	Swiss francs
	28.90/94	Belgian francs
	4.9625/75	French francs
	1657.8/2.8	Italian lire
	93.00/10	Japanese yen
	7.2600/00	Swedish crowns
	6.2300/50	Norwegian crowns
	5.6352/02	Danish crowns
One sterling	$1.6476/86	
One ounce of gold	$376.70/377.10	

Dollar falls to new low against yen

NEW YORK (R) — The dollar fell to a post-war low against the Japanese yen and tumbled against the German mark Monday after buying by central banks last week failed to halt its slide.

The dollar dropped to a record low of 92.70 yen in Tokyo, although it recovered slightly to 92.90 in early New York trading. It fell more than two pfennings against the mark to 1.4005 marks from 1.4235 late Friday.

The dollar continues to slide because of worries over the U.S. economy and the belief among traders around the world that U.S. and international financial officials are not doing enough to protect the dollar.

The strength of the mark, which some are saying is replacing the dollar as the currency of choice for investors seeking a safe haven, has contributed.

"U.S. officials haven't given the impression that they are seriously concerned about a weakening dollar," said Masashiro Kawasaki, a manager at Sakura Bank in London.

The dollar has been prey to more selling after it took a battering last week despite coordinated rounds of dollar buying on Friday by the Federal Reserve (Fed) and the Bank of Japan and at least a dozen central banks in Europe.

Federal Reserve Governor Susan Phillips said over the weekend that "certainly the dollar is something we look at.... but domestic considerations are in many ways primary."

Traders said her comments suggest the Fed's main focus remains the domestic economy and reinforces perceptions that officials at the central bank are not unduly concerned with the dollar's fall.

The Fed has raised interest rates seven times in just over a year in a bid to slow the economy and ward off inflation, and may be hesitant to raise rates again to defend the dollar.

But many traders said the only effective remedy for the dollar's troubles would be coordinated interest rate changes, which many considered unlikely given the relatively low priority the dollar has for the wealthiest industrial nations.

Japan's Finance Minister Masayoshi Takemura, told reporters Monday that Japan is considering requesting an emergency meeting of the world's seven wealthiest nations to discuss the falling dollar.

A weaker dollar makes U.S. goods more competitive but also can cause the prices of imports to rise in the United States.

Traders also expressed frustration with the comments from Fed officials. "I can't believe the statements we're getting from those charged with protecting the value of our currency," said one.

The dollar slid to 1.1750 Swiss francs from 1.2010 late Friday. The British pound rose to $1.6455 from $1.6295, and the Canadian dollar rose to 1.4155 Canadian dollars from 1.4065 Canadian dollars.

Conoco signs deal to develop Iran Sirri fields

LONDON (R) — U.S. oil company Conoco, a subsidiary of Du Pont de Nemours and Co, said it had signed a deal with National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) to develop Iran's Sirri A and E offshore oil and gas fields.

The fields are expected to produce 120,000 barrels per day (b/d) of oil, a Conoco spokesman said.

"Under the terms of the contract an affiliate of Conoco, Conoco Iran N.V., acting as contractor for NIOC, will carry out its development activities and the fields will be operated by NIOC's offshore division," the spokesman said.

Conoco Iran N.V. will be incorporated in the Netherlands.

The Sirri A and E oil and gas fields were discovered in 1972 and 1976 respectively but have not yet been developed.

The Conoco spokesman was unable to provide details of estimated reserves or say when production was expected to begin.

But a Tehran-based paper reported Monday that Sirri A field should be ready for production in two and a half years, with the Sirri E field on stream one year later.

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Aussies sink in worst accident in America's Cup history

SAN DIEGO (Agencies) — Strong winds and heavy seas Sunday caused the most destructive day in the 144-year history of the America's Cup — with oneAustralia sinking, France 3 losing its mast and other yachts suffering damage.

Although all 17 people aboard oneAustralia and two members of the French crew went into the water, all were quickly picked up by rescue craft.

It was the first time a boat has been lost in the America's Cup.

The 80-foot, carbon-fiber Australian craft went without warning, folding amidships and sinking in 2½ minutes in 500 feet of water.

The wind registered 20 to 22 knots at that moment, according to skipper John Bertrand.

"It's hard to know exactly what happened," Bertrand said. "We'd just completed a tack onto starboard and were winding the sails on. A rain squall was going through. My head was down adjusting the trim tab.

"I heard a loud crack like a cannon going off. I thought the rig was coming down.

Bertrand ordered all hands to remove their rubber sea boots, which would inhibit their swimming.

The seas were about seven feet with a sharp chop that punished all of the yachts.

Team New Zealand, not wishing to risk its unbeaten boat, dropped out a few minutes later.

Bertrand said his team would use its backup boat — the one it raced in the first two round-robins of the challenger trials — to complete the fourth round and compete in the semi-finals starting March 18.

France 3, still fighting to save its slim hopes of reaching the semi-finals, led Rioja de Espana by 34 seconds into the last windward leg when its mast broke clean off at the fourth, next-to-the-highest, spreaders. Two crewmen went overboard but were quickly picked up.

Spain completed the course to claim the victory.

In the only race which both challengers completed, last-place Sydney 95 upset Nippon by 1:22.

The defenders also had problems on their course. Dennis Conner's Stars and Stripes had continuing problems with its main sail and at one point had to haul a second man, Greg Prussia, up the mast to bring down Ralf Steitz, who had suffered a blow to the head while trying to make repairs.

Stars and Stripes eventually dropped out, while the women of America3 sailed their new Mighty Mary under headsail only to take the triumph.

OneAustralia trailed Team New Zealand by 21 seconds at the first leeward mark, one-third into the 18.55-mile race, and was about halfway up the next windward leg when disaster struck.

First the sails went slack as the boat started to fold like a jacknife about 12 feet aft of the mast. Two and a half minutes later the tip of the mast disappeared beneath the stormy waves.

As the yacht continued to collapse, the crew abandoned ship.

They were still being collected by the Team New Zealand and oneAustralia inflatable chase boats when the yacht was well on its way to the bottom, dragged down by its 40,000-pound keel.

Bertrand said he hoped to salvage the boat, which went down with the team's best mast and sails. OneAustralia was scheduled to race France 3 Monday, but Bertrand said he would ask for a lay day on Monday to prepare the older boat.

However, coach/advisor Harold Cudmore, speaking for Le Defi Francais, indicated the French would not agree.

"The question is whether Bertrand bought that boat's performance at an engineering cost that was too heavy," Cudmore said. "John understands that if he take risks, he has to pay the penalty."

Designed by the Australian Fluid Thinking consortium, the hull earlier was the center of a controversy over a possible violation of the rule limiting each team to two new boats.

OneAustralia syndicate president Peter Morris said, wryly, "That answers the two-boat controversy."

Australian yachtsmen stunned

Australia's yachting fraternity reacted with stunned amazement on Monday at the sinking within a few minutes of America's Cup yacht oneAustralia, said to be the country's brightest hope to win back the cup since 1983.

"Totally amazed — that's the general reaction," said cruising yacht club of Australia media officer Peter Campbell, a veteran yachting journalist.

Australian yachtsmen following oneAustralia's progress in the event off San Diego, California are in "a state of incredible shock and total disappointment," Campbell told Reuters in Sydney.

"I've had constant (phone) calls," he added.

OneAustralia had already qualified for the semifinals of the Challenger elimination series when it sank. OneAustralia was second in the Challenger standings behind Team New Zealand.

OneAustralia skipper John Bertrand told reporters in San Diego his team would now work hard to refit its other, older boat and try to remain competitive.

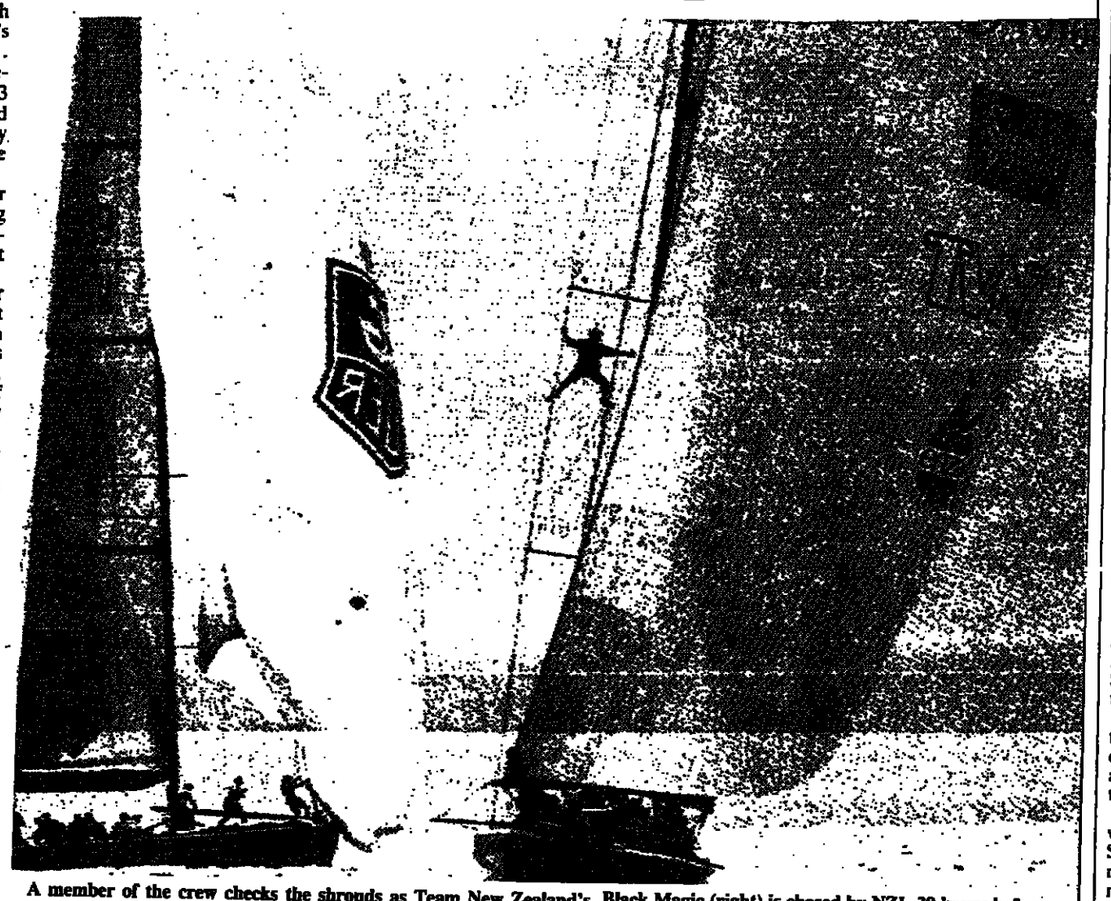
OneAustralia was the country's best hope of winning back the cup, which Australia wrested from the United States under the sponsorship of businessman Alan Bond in 1983, Campbell said. The cup returned to the United States in 1987.

"It would be as strong, if not better, than Bond's challenge (in 1983)," he said. "It's very sad."

Bertrand said after the incident that he wanted Australian Prime Minister Paul Keating to contact American authorities to "see if we can salvage some of our front line sails and mast."

A spokesman for Keating said no such request had yet been made to the prime minister's office in Canberra. But, the spokesman added: "The prime minister would be grateful for any assistance that the U.S. authorities would be able to give.

"The prime minister shares the disappointment of the oneAustralia team and hopes they will be able to continue their challenge with their second yacht," he told Reuters.



A member of the crew checks the shrouds as Team New Zealand's Black Magic (right) is chased by NZL 39 hours before disaster struck the race (AFP photo)

Souness cited in payments scandal

LONDON (R) — English Premier League investigators want to speak to former Liverpool manager Graeme Souness after allegations that £300,000 ($480,000) has gone missing from a transfer deal in which he was involved.

The deal concerns Danish international Torben Piechnik who moved from FC Copenhagen to Liverpool in 1992 in a transfer brokered by Rune Hauge, the Norwegian agent whose dealings led to the sacking of Arsenal manager George Graham last month.

Rick Parry, the Premier League's chief executive, said on Monday he would ask Souness to give evidence to the League's transfer inquiry.

Parry's decision follows allegations of discrepancies in Piechnik's transfer during Souness's time as manager of the club.

Parry said the investigating teama had already spoken to officials at Liverpool but added he would like Souness to give evidence.

Police and Tax officials would also like to interview Souness over the missing money, according to Today newspaper.

Liverpool paid £550,000 ($885,000) for Piechnik but Today reported that FC Copenhagen had said they received only £250,000 ($400,000) for him.

Piechnik, who played just 25 times for Liverpool and is now with Aarhus back in Denmark, is quoted in the paper as saying "I still have my contract. I am willing to come to London to give it to the Premier League."

Souness strongly denied the allegations made in Today later on Monday.

Christie pulls out of Barcelona

LONDON (AFP) — Linford Christie pulled out of the world indoor athletics championships in Barcelona on Monday, citing fatigue as the reason for his withdrawal.

The British Athletic Federation (BAF) ended the mystery surrounding the 100m Olympic champion by announcing that he had withdrawn from the 60m.

BAF spokesman Tony Ward said: "Linford is extremely tired and does not feel he can work up the adrenalin for the three rounds of the event required on the same day.

"Therefore, he did not believe he would be able to do himself justice and has withdrawn."

The British team captain, who was reported to ahve told German TV on Saturday night that he would not be competing, has run in six European indoor meetings and one in Japan in the last month.

Christie's withdrawal comes just four days before Friday's start of the three-day showpiece in Barcelona and prompted the world governing body to accuse him of leaving them in the lurch.

IAAF spokesman Christopher Winner said: "You can't be angry with the world and Olympic champion — there was no pistol to his head — but we are very disappointed, shocked and flabbergasted.

"It's his decision but it leaves me speechless."

Christie's decision further damages the prestige of the event, after the United States' announcement on Sunday that they would be sending a second string team, minus world stars like 400m runner Michael Johnson and heptathlete Jackie Joyner-Kersee.

In an attempt to restore some gloss to the field, the IAAF sent an SOS to Kenyan star Moses Kiptanui.

The IAAF are hoping that steeplechase double world champion Kiptanui up-and-coming middle distance star Venuste Niyongabo can be persuaded to fill the breach in Barcelona.

Winner added: "Athletes like Sally Gunnell and Colin Jackson told us they would not be coming months ago and that's cricket, but this is extremely discouraging after raising the hopes of so many watchers and lovers of athletics."

"With all due respect to people like Tony Jarrett, Christie was the head and captain of the British ship. When we first heard his decision, we thought it was posturing or that he had been misquoted."

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Courier wins Scottsdale final

SCOTTSDALE (Agencies) — Jim Courier survived another stunning upset bid by Australian qualifier Mark Philippoussis here Sunday, taking a 7-6 (7-2), 6-4 triumph in the $700,000 ATP Arizona Championship finals.

Courier won his 16th career crown and second of the year in 89 minutes.

The former world number-one, currently ranked 13th on the ATP circuit, matched his 19-2 start of last year.

He joined Andre Agassi, Thomas Enqvist and Richard Krajicek as winners of two titles so far this year.

"My serve was much better and I was happy overall with my game," Courier said. "I was mixing it up and trying to keep him off balance."

Courier faced triple break point in the fifth game of the first set but held in a critical moment.

"That was a momentum game," he said. "It was big to stay on top."

Philippoussis, ranked 272nd, kept the pressure on Courier the entire match, firing 13 aces and setting the tempo much of the time.

"This week has done a lot for me to help start my career off," Philippoussis said.

"It's good for me to beat these guys and to know I could do it again."

Evert Cup final postponed

In Indian Wells, California, after a wait of 4½ hours, officials at the $430,000 Evert Cup women's tennis tournament decided Sunday to postpone the singles and doubles finals until Monday because of a steady rain.

Eighth-seeded Mary Joe Fernandez of Miami was scheduled to face No. 4 Natasha Zvereva of Belarus, followed by the championship doubles match pitting Larisa Neiland of Latvia and Arantxa Sanchez Vicario of Spain against Lindsay Davenport and Lisa Raymond, both of the United States.

Also Monday, the $1.8 million Newsweek champions Cup Men's tennis tournament began at the same site, the Hyatt Grand Champions Resort.

Krajicek overcomes countryman to claim title

In Rotterdam, Netherlands, fifth-seeded Richard Krajicek overpowered compatriot Paul Haarhuis 7-6 (7-5), 6-4 to win his second ATP Tour title in as many weeks Sunday, claiming the ABN Amro world crown.

Match point came just in time as a visibly pained Krajicek hobbled off court after injuring his right knee while stretching for backhand volley to finish the match.

After winning last week in Stuttgart, the 10th-ranked and fifth seeded Krajicek accepted the Rotterdam tournament trophy and $80,000 winner's purse with an ice-pack strapped to his knee.

"I don't know what happened, but I can't bend my knee properly anymore," Krajicek told Dutch television.

"I served unbelievably well today," said Krajicek, who served 13 aces in the match.

The first all-Dutch final in any ATP Tour event was a clash between Krajicek's dominant-serve-volley power and unseeded Haarhuis' more consistent percentage play from the baseline.

Haarhuis, ranked 44th on the tour and a notorious slow starter, committed several unforced errors as Krajicek pounced on every short ball with powerfully driven forehands.

Two winning backhand passes and a top-spin lob gave Krajicek the vital first break in the fourth game and he lost just two service points in storming to a 5-2 lead.

But Haarhuis, gaining in strength every time long rallies were played, fought back to break in the ninth game and the set went to a tiebreaker.

Three aces in the tiebreaker helped Krajicek to a set point and he forced Haarhuis to drive a low volley into the net to take the set after 42 minutes.

Haarhuis, a four-time losing semifinalist in Rotterdam, will join Krajicek in the Dutch Davis Cup team for the home tie against Germany later this month.

"It's been a good month for Dutch tennis," Krajicek said.

Agassi leads field in Japan Open

American Andre Agassi leads the men's field of 56 players for the $1.22 million Japan Open tennis championship in April, organisers said Monday.

Agassi, ranked No. 2 in the world and the 1995 Australian Open champion, is competing in the Japan Open for the first time.

Other leading players include Boris Becker of Germany, ranked No. 3; Michael Chang of the United States, No. 4, and American Jim Courier, the 1992 Japan Open champion, the organisers said.

In the women's field for the April 10-16 tournament at Tokyo's Ariake Colosseum, Japan's Kimiko Date is the highest ranked with a current world ranking of No. 8.

Date is seeking her fourth straight Japan Open title.

The men's singles winner receives $156,000 and the women's champion $25,000.

Muster wins Mexico Open

In Mexico City, Thomas Muster, thriving again on clay courts, won the Mexican Open for the third straight year Sunday with a 7-6 (7-4), 7-5 victory over Fernando Meligeni of Brazil.

The No. 2 seed from Austria converted all four break point opportunities he had in the 85th-minute match. Meligeni was appearing in his first ATP Tour final.

The title was Muster's 24th, and 23 of those have come on clay. The Austrian has won 17 consecutive clay-court finals in which he has appeared, a streak dating to May 1990.

After winning the first set in a tiebreak, Muster broke in the 11th game of the second set to lead 6-5, then closed the match with his fourth ace.

Javier Frana of Argentina and Leo Lavelle of Mexico won the doubles title, upsetting top-seeded Marc Goellner and Diego Nargiso 7-5, 6-3.

This was the first tour event in 1995 played on clay.

Unseeded Kruger captures crown

In San Juan, Puerto Rico, South Africa's Joanette Kruger won her first WTA title here Sunday when she beat Japan's Kyoko Nagatsuka 7-6 (7-5), 6-3 in the final of the $61,000 Puerto Rico Open.

Kruger joined France's Mary Pierce and troubled American player Jennifer Capriati in making Puerto Rico her first tour crown.

She also became the event's first unseeded winner with the victory, worth 25,000 dollars.

"I'm very happy and very confident with my game," Kruger said. "Now I'm looking forward to this year. I feel my game is improving so I guess I can begin to expect good things from myself."

Kruger, whose best prior WTA showing came in reaching the 1993 San Marino Open semifinals, fell behind 5-1 in the first set, but rallied with 13 backhand winners.

Jim Courier

1. Pete Sampras (USA)	4389 pts
2. Andre Agassi (USA)	4017
3. Boris Becker (Ger)	3251
4. Michael Chang (USA)	2697
5. Sergi Bruguera (Spa)	2619
6. Goran Ivanisevic (Cro)	2500
7. Alberto Berasategui (Spa)	2488
8. Michael Stich (Ger)	2467
9. Yvgueni Kafelnikov (Rus)	2434
10. Richard Krajicek (Neth)	2239
11. Jim Courier (USA)	2012
12. Wayne Ferreira (SA)	1937
13. Todd Martin (USA)	1909
14. Andrei Medvedev (Ukr)	1863
15. Magnus Larsson (Swe)	1723

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Jean-Claude Van Damm
TimeCop
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Comedian star: Adel Imam —
Bakhit & Andadileh
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Nantes stretch record to make history

PARIS (AFP) — Nantes put their midweek European misadventure behind them and made French football history this weekend when they stretched their unbeaten league season to 28 matches after beating Nice 2-1 at home.

Nantes, hammered 5-1 at Bayer Leverkusen in Germany in a first-leg UEFA Cup quarter-final on Tuesday, now have 62 points after 17 wins and 11 draws.

They are eleven points clear of rivals Paris St. Germain who came down to earth with a bump after their magnificent 1-1 Champions Cup draw at Barcelona in midweek.

Luis Fernandez' side were held 1-1 at Parc des Princes by Auxerre and they were lucky to escape with a point despite taking the lead through a fine goal from midfielder Vincent guerin.

Guerin skipped a tackle and fired into the top left-hand corner from 30m after ten minutes.

Auxerre surged back, Gerard Baticle controllign a cross on his chest and slipping a low near-post shot past Bernard Lama just before the half-hour.

From then on it was all Auxerre, who tasted European success during the week when they came away with a draw from Arsenal in the Cup Winners' Cup.

In the final minutes Sabri Lamouchi had the ball snatched off his toe by Lama, Corentin Martins saw an effort hit the underside of the bar, and Lilian Lastlandes, one-to-one with Lama, blasted wide.

Nantes went behind after just five minutes when Nice striker Mohamed Chaouch headed home a Stehane Collect corner. But they battled back well and snatched their win thanks to two penalties — the second by Japhet N'Doram in the dying seconds after Nigerian winger Samson Siasia was brougth down by Olivier Fugen.

In Italy Lazio striker Pierluigi Casiraghi and AC Milan's Marco Simone both hit four goals in a goal romp at the top of the Italian League Sunday.

Third-place Lazio, fresh from a UEFA Cup success over Borussia Dortmund, slaughtered Fiorentina 8-2 in their Serie A clash despite the absence of top scorer Giuseppe Signori.

Milan won 5-0 at lowly Brescia.

EUROPEAN SOCCER

Simone, who also scored twice in midweek against Benefica in the European Cup quarter-finals, snatched his first on the stroke of half-time before adding a second-half hat-trick. Paolo Maldini completed the scoring.

Casiraghi duplicated Simone's feat, but only took four minutes to open his account before adding three more after the break — the last from the spot with just one minute to go. Fiorentina's Rui Costa and Gabriel Batistuta were left to claim consolation goals for the visitors.

Leaders Juventus, meanwhile, failed to join the party by stuttering to a goalless stalemate at Inter Milan.

That result allowed Parma to edge to within four points after a 2-0 away win at Torino. Lazio are on 37 points, ahead of AS Roma on goal diffrence.

Former AC Milan star Ruud Gullit was anotehr headline name as the Dutchman grabbed two second-half goals in Sampdoria's 3-0 home win over fourth-placed AC Roma.

In Spain, Real Madrid kept Johan Cruyff and Co at arms length with a convincing 4-0 destruction of Sporting Gijon.

That deflated Cruyf's delight after Barcelona had beaten fifth-placed Real Zaragoza 3-0 — the visitors playing most of the match without goalkeeper Andoni Cedrun who was shown the red card early in the first-half.

The individual performance of the day came from Meho Kodro. He scored four of Real Sociedad's five goals in a 5-2 victory over Tenerife.

Deportivo La Coruna, meanwhile, stayed in touch in third place after last week's defeat to Espanol by snatching a 1-0 win over Compostela. Real now have 37 points to Barcelona's 33 with Deportivo a further point behind.

Real secured their win with three first-half goals from Fernando Hierro, Amavisca and Redondo before Michael Laudrup sealed victory in the 64th minute.

Barcelona, shaken during a 1-1 draw in midweek with French side Paris Saint Germain in the European Champions Cup, were soon in the driving seat after keeper Cedrun was sent off for a foul on Aitor Beriguistain after 13 minutes.

The spot-kick was put away by Dutch defender Ronald Koeman to the delight of 75,000 fans.

Beriguistain added the second one minute after the break and Guillermo Amor wrapped things up with 60 seconds to go.

Kodro's goals, meanwhile, came in the 13th, 30th — from the spot — 72nd and 89th minute.

Kaiserslautern striker Stefan Kuntz condemned German leaders Borusia Dortmund to a 1-0 defeat on Saturday — only their second league loss this season.

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Kuntz's goal on the stroke of half-time was Dortmund's first taste of league loss this season.

Kuntz's goal on the stroke of half-time was Dortmund's first taste of league defeat since they went down 4-1 against Eintracht Frankfurt on September 3.

His headed goal, from a corner by Swiss international Ciriaco Sofrza, allowed Bremen, who won 3-1 at bottom club VFL Bochum, to move to within two points of the pacesetters.

Italian scoring leaders

Gabriel Batistuta, Fiorentina 19
Abel Balbo, Roma 14
Giuseppe Signor, Lazio 13
Sandro Tovalieri, Bari 13
Gianluca Vialli, Juventus 11
Gianfranco Zola, Parma 11
Marco Simone, AC Miland 10

Spanish scoring leader

19 — Ivan Zamorano (Real Madri)
18 — Meho Kodro (Real Sociedad) Davor Suker (Sevilla) Davor Suker (Sevilla)
11 — Pedrag Mijatovic (Valencia)
10 — Vladimir Gudelj (Celta), Angel Cuellar (Real Betis), Carlos Munoz (Real Oviedo)
9 — Jose Amavisca (Real Madrid)
8 — Hristo Stoichkov and Ronald Koeman (both Barcelona), Bebeto (Deportivo Coruna), Florin Raducioiu (Espanol), Jose Zalazar (Albacete), Juan Esnaider and Gustavo Poyet (both Real Zaragoz), Juan Pizzi (Tenerife)

Baseball negotiations stalled again

SCOTTSDALE, Arizona (AP) — Talks between striking U.S. Major League Baseball players and owners broke off again Sunday, making it likely that replacement will be playing on opening day.

"Without a miracle," Colorado Rockies chairman Jerry McMorris said, "Major League players will not be on the field opening day."

Both sides had agreed this weekend was critical if players were to end their 6½-month strike by the scheduled start of the season on April 2. The 900 unsigned players need a week to negotiate contracts and three weeks of practice to be ready.

"There's a pretty clear indication to me the owners have already decided to blow off the beginning of the season," Union head Donald Fehr said.

Players and owners were angered by the proposals each made on Saturday. For now, there wasn't much for them to talk to each other about.

Owners began exhibition games last week with replacement players and Minor Leaguers willing to play and say they're prepared to open the season with them, even if attendence is cut substantially.

"The game's going to go on," said McMorris, who took over as the owners' lead negotiator after acting commissioner bud Selig left Thursday night. "The question is, 'which players are going to be on the field?' We can't let this paralyse the whole industry and the whole country as far baseball."

The focus of the talks probably will shift to the National Labour Relations Board, which this week is expected to rule on the union's unfair labour practice charges.

Asian U-18 Basketball Championship

Odeh secures Jordan's victory in final second

By Omar Bashtawi in Manila and Aleen Bannayan in Amman

JORDAN'S UNDER-18 national basketball team Monday scored a momentous final-second 72-71 victory over hosts the Philippines in the quarterfinal round of the 13th Asian Youth Basketball Championship currently under way in Manila.

Jordan's win was crucial as the top two teams in the group will move to the semifinal round of the competition in which 15 nations are taking part.

The Kingdom's team will next have a difficult match against titleholders China today (Tuesday), before meeting Japan Wednesday. Jordan will therefore have to win one of the two remaining matches in order to move into the last four.

Saif Lad'a and Ma'an Odeh secured Jordan's victory over the Philippines in the final 11 seconds. Lad'a equalised for Jordan at 70-70. The hosts then scored from a free throw to lead 71-70. Odeh got a pass from Fadi Al Saqqa and netted the buzzer-beater to clinch Jordan's unexpected victory.

The scoreboard showed a 72-71 win for Jordan as the players and the delegation, including Basketball Federational Chairman Awwad Haddad were ecstatic not believing they had managed to end the nerve-wrecking event in victory.

The Philippines had led throughout most of the first half, which they won 40-36.

Jordan's top scorers were: Zeid Alkhas (20), Ashraf Samara (12), Samer Nino, Ma'an Odeh and Ihab Emsih (9).

In a post-match statement, the team's assistant coach, Imad Al Saeed, said: "The players were obviously nervous because it was a crucial match and they did not face a full court press defence in their friendly matches prior to the competition. We now have to score one more win to move to the semifinals."

"It is a big win for Jordan and the more so because we played against a tough home team," said Jordan's head coach Murad Barakat, who was a member of the national team that also played against the Philippines in the 1986 Asian Games in Seoul, South Korea.

The only Arab team in the competition, the Jordanian team qualified to the quarterfinals after scoring a crushing 71-24 win over Hong Kong and 88-35 over Singapore before losing to top-ranked South Korea 75-61.

The other quarterfinal group includes South Korea, Indonesia, Thailand and Taiwan.

In other matches Monday, Taiwan beat Indonesia 80-67, South Korea beat Thailand 64-57, and China beat Japan 78-53.

The Chinese, who average 196 centimetres tall, are seeking their fifth title since the tournament began in 1970.

Atlanta Olympics

The 500-day countdown begins

ATLANTA (AFP) — The race to the 1996 Atlanta Olympics enters the last lap on Tuesday, when the "500-days-to-go" countdown begins.

Bill Payne, president of the Atlanta Committee for the Olympic Games (ACOG) welcomed the milestone both as a chance to measure ACOG's success so far, and as the signal to start nailing down the details of every aspect of Games planning.

"I would say it's an impossibility that these Games will not be a resounding success," Payne said.

He said his single most difficult task now had little to do with the raising of the final 8-10 per cent of required funds (reportedly on tap from ticket sales and corporate sponsorship deals), or the completion of the showcase Olympic Stadium (reportedly on schedule).

Instead, Payne's biggest concern is keeping his staff motivated through day after day of frenetic, sometimes frustrating activity.

"Keeping folks here at ACOG, keeping them motivated — keeping their eye on the prize," he said. "The release of adrenaline always has a backlash, that's fatigue. Our greatest challenge is to make sure that fatigue doesn't kick in until Aug. 5 (1996)."

There are,, however, concrete problems to be sorted out, and concrete projects to be completed.

This month sees the scheduled ground breaking for two Olympic facilities — a gymnasium for preliminary basketball and the yachting venue at Savannah, Georgia.

Tickets go on sale to the general public on May 1. Scott Anderson, in charge of ticketing, said that despite scare stories about the number of tickets set aside for sponsors and the Olympic family, the size of the venues means that more tickets will be available to the general public than at any previous Games.

"They're plentiful. They're affordable. And they're easy to buy," he said. "Tickets to every single Olympic sport will be available for $25 or less."

Tickets to about half the events will be distributed by lottery.

Until applications are in, Anderson said, it is impossible to predict anyone's chances of getting precisely the tickets they want.

"Everyone will have an equal chance for each session, but the broader the request, the better the chance of getting more of the tickets requested."

Payne added: "Obviously, if you order only the finals of the most popular events, you're less likely to succeed in the lottery."

Anderson also brushed aside concerns about accommodation shortages for spectators, saying many rooms that have been provisionally block booked by sponsors and other favoured groups would be let go as the Games approach.

"We don't think there is going to be a problem," he said. "History tells us there is usually concern about accommodation far in advance. We believe there will be rooms available to the general public."

ACOG are not yet ready to unveil their transportation plan, though they have signed with the Atlanta publci transport system, MARTA, to provide the bulk of spectator transport.

A separate system will be in place for members of the Olympic Family — athletes, officials, the media and administrators.

The 85,000-seat, $1.70 million Olympic Stadium is on schedule, Payne said. Plans to hold a test event in the stadium next September have been scrapped, not because it won't be ready but because that is too late in the year for an outdoor athletics event.

Instead, two test events will be held in the stadium in May and June of 1996.

Other venues begin hosting their test events this year. They include the U.S. rowing championships, the Synchronized Swimming World Cup, the U.S. Open Badminton Championships, the Pan Pacific Swimming Championships, the World Freestyle Wrestling Championships, the Table Tennis World Team Cup and the Modern Pentathlon World Cup final.

The actual competition schedule for the Games is still being fined tuned.

Bobek to replace Harding/ Kerrigan circus

BIRMINGHAM (AFP) — Wild child Nicole Bobek's inclusion in Tuesday's World Figure Skating Championships here comes just a year after the Tonya Harding/Nancy Kerrigan scandal hogged Olympic headlines.

Detroit's Bobek is, like Harding, another colourful character to emerge as America's ambassador in this most glamorous of sports.

Harding's ex-husband Jeff Gillooly masterminded the clubbing of rival Kerrigan's knee at the U.S. championships on January 6 last year, easing Harding's path to the national title — the Winter Olympic qualifying event.

The Harding/Kerrigan sideshow become the talk of the Winter Olympics in a saga with more twists and turns than a Shakespearean drama. Harding was eventually convicted for her involvement in the attack.

Bobek, of Czech descent, also had a brush with the authorities in November when she was caught in a friend's house, allegedly with money in her hand. However, her lawyer, Michael Friedman said no money was taken.

On January 19, Bobek was put on two years' probation after pleading guilty to house invasion. She must also abide by a nightly curfew and do community service.

That brush with the law, general comtempt for discipline and authority, and a strong competitive streak make for reasonable comparisons with Harding.

Nicknamed "Brass Knuckles" for wearing a ring on every finger, this 17-year-old, chainsmoking blonde is set to add some spice to this 42-nation event.

However, Bobek, who competes in Monday's qualifying, is unlikely to challenge for gold in this March 7 to 12 competition.

A straight fight between France's five-times European champion Surya Bonaly and China's Olympic bronze medallist, Chen Lu is expected.

Barkley scores 31 as Suns beat Golden State

OAKLAND (AP) — Charles Barkley scored 31 points and Kevin Johnson had 20 of his 22 in the second half Sunday as the Phoenix Suns beat Golden State 122-112, sending the Warriors to their sixth straight loss.

Donyell Marshall had 29 points and 11 rebounds and Tim Hardaway added 25 points, but it wasn't enough to reverse Golden State's tailspin. Hardaway made six 31-pointers, increasing his season total to 142 to surpass by one the team mark Latrell Sprewell established last year.

Pacific-Division leading Phoenix, up by a point heading into the fourth period, lost the lead 93-91 when Sprewell hit a 3-pointer with 10:42 remaining.

Barkley quickly helped the Suns regain command, scoring seven points in a 17-6 run. Danny Ainge's 3-pointer at the end put Phoenix on top 108-99 with 6:05 remaining.

Heat 103, Bullets 90: At Miami, Ledell Eackles scored 17 points as Miami's bench outscored the Washington bench 41-18. Miami's victory kept the Bullets from their first three-game winning streak of the season.

Miami's Glen Rice, Billy Owens, and Matt Geiger scored 16 points apiece, while Juwan Howard and Chris Webber combined to score 46 of Washington's 90 points. Webber scored 21 points, several coming on thunderous dunks, and Howard added 25, his 40th consecutive game in double figures.

Two free throws by Calbert Cheaney sliced Miami's lead to 91-81 with 4:13 remaining, but a pair of jumpers by Rice and three consecutive inside baskets by Geiger down the streltch secured the victory.

Nets 99, Bucks 94: At East Rutherford, New Jersey, Kenny Anderson had 22 points and 12 assists, and combined with Derrick Coleman to score all but three of New Jersey's fourth-quarter points as the Nets snapped a three-game losing streak.

Coleman finished with 21 points.

In the final two minutes, both Coleman and Chris Morris hit three free throws to wrap up the victory.

Glenn Robinson scored 21 points to lead Milwaukee, which has dropped five of its last six games.

Spurs 124, Rockets 103: At San Antonio, David Robinson scored 31 points to lead San Antonio to its eighth straight win. The NBA's hottest team has won 11 consecutive home games and 17 of its last 19 games and are 32-7 since Dennis Rodman returned to the team on Dec. 10.

Sean Elliott scored 21 points, Avery Johnson had 17 points and 10 assists and Chuck Person 16 points for San Antonio, which pulled within 1 games of Midwest Division-leading Utah.

Hakeem Olajuwon led the Rockets with 25 points and Clyde Drexler added 22.

Magic 113, Hawks 111, OT: At Orlando, Florida, Dennis Scott's 3-pointer with less than a second remaining in overtime boosted Orlando to victory. Scott's sixth 3-pointer of the game erased a one-point Hawks lead.

Shaquille O'Neal scored 30 points for the Magic, which went the final 4:56 of regulation and first 3:45 of overtime without a field goal. Anfernee Hardaway forced the extra period with two free throws and finished with 23 points, while Nick Anderson had 21 points and Scott 20.

King 88, Hornets 80: At Sacramento, California, Mitch Richmond scored 20 points and Randy Brown had 10 of his 14 points in the fourth quarter as the Sacramento Kings ended a seven-game losing streak.

Walt Williams also scored 20 points for the Kings, who shot 66.7 per cent in the fourth quarter and improved their record to 15-0 this season when holding their opponent under 90 points.

RESULTS

New Jersey 99
Miami 103
San Antonio 124
Phoenix 122
Orlando 113
Sacramento 88
L.A. Lakers 105
Milwaukee 94
Washington 90
Houston 103
Golden State 112
Atlanta 111, OT
Charlotte 80
Minnesota 102

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THE DAY THE ROOF FELL IN

Both vulnerable. South deals.

NORTH
♠ 4 3
♥ J 9 6 2
♦ Q J 5 2
♣ Q 9 6

WEST
♠ A J 10 8
♥ K 7 5
♦ A 8 4
♣ K J 3

EAST
♠ K 6 5
♥ 10 3
♦ 10 6 3
♣ 10 8 7 5 2

SOUTH
♠ Q 9 7 2
♥ A Q 8 4
♦ K 9 7
♣ A 4

The bidding:

South	West	North	East
1 NT	Pass	Pass	Pass

Opening lead: Ten of ♠

Keeping count is the key to winning bridge. Not only of the distribution, but also of high-card points.

This hand is from a pair tournament in Rye, N.Y.

Note West's pass of the opening bid of one no trump. In the modern style, a double of a one-no-trump opening shows the ability to defeat the contract in hand. For example, you might double with a seven-card minor suit headed by Q J 10 and two outside aces, even though the point-count is only 11. With the equivalent of a no-trump opening bid, pass and see how the bidding develops.

Sitting East-West respectively were Myrna Bachiochi and Harold Feldheim, of Hamden, Conn. Feldheim led the ten of spades, showing zero or two higher cards in the suit. East rose with the king and returned the six, covered by the seven and won by the eight.

Since declarer was known to have a minimum of 15 points for the no-trump opening, all the high cards were accounted for, so West found the deceptive switch to the jack of clubs, ducked to the ace. East encouraged with the eight. Declarer crossed to the jack of diamonds, which held and led a heart to the queen, losing to the king.

Trading on the illusion he had created, West continued by leading the three of clubs. Expecting to find the ten with West, declarer finessed the nine. The result was disastrous.

East won the ten and reverted to a spade, allowing her partner to score two more tricks in that suit. When the smoke cleared, the defenders had collected four spades, two clubs and a trick in each red suit, for down two and an absolute top.

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Iraq moves to fight U.S. drive on oil sanctions

BAGHDAD (Agencies) — Iraq has launched its own diplomatic offensive to counter U.S. moves to block efforts to lift or ease Gulf war sanctions on its oil exports.

A senior Iraqi official said in a published interview that Washington was making "vicious attempts" to revive a proposal for U.N.-monitored sale of $1.6 billion worth of Iraqi oil in an attempt to forestall attempts at lifting the embargo.

Foreign Minister Mohammad Saeed Al Sahaf and other Iraqi officials are touring several countries including members of the U.N. Security Council to seek support for their case.

The tours coincided with a campaign by Madeleine Albright, the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, to lobby Council members to block any attempt to ease the sanctions on Iraq.

Mr. Sahaf visited China and Indonesia last month and is now on his way to Nigeria, a non-permanent member of the Council.

"Our visit to China and Indonesia was good and successful," said Abdul Jabbar Al Douri, Foreign Ministry under-secretary.

Mr. Douri said Riyad Al Qeisi, another Foreign Ministry under-secretary, was in France and would soon join Deputy Prime Minister Tareq Aziz in New York to lobby Council members before the formal review of sanctions on March 13.

France officially opened its interests section in Baghdad on Monday, restoring its diplomatic presence in the Iraqi capital to end a four-year rupture since Iraq's 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

"The French decision has come at the right time. We are looking forward to the return of other European countries to their embassies," Mr. Douri said.

He said Italy had also decided to open an interests section in Baghdad.

He said Mr. Sahaf would continue with his current tour and that the Iraqi diplomacy would be "moving eastward and westward and everywhere until the tails of the conspiracy are cut off."

Abdul Ghani Abdul Ghafur, member of the regional command of the ruling Baath Party, told the party newspaper Al Thawra that the proposal for a one-time sale of Iraqi oil "contained conspiracy and flagrant violation of national sovereignty."

"It is necessary to enlighten the people of the mean attempts by the United States of America to pass vicious proposals concerning resolutions 706 and 712 (setting out the offer)," Mr. Abdul Ghafur said.

The offer, already rejected by Iraq, allows it to export limited quantities of oil to pay for its urgent humanitarian needs, 1991 Gulf war reparations and other U.N. costs.

It requires strict U.N. supervision of the distribution of any food bought by the export proceeds. Iraq flatly rejects the stationing of international monitors on its territory.

Baghdad diplomats say the United States and Iraq were now locked in a diplomatic tug of war.

"The fact that Albright made the tour means Iraq's case was having a favourable hearing at the Council," one diplomat said. "Washington's diplomatic campaign on the embargo is proof that Iraqi diplomats had made some headway at the Council."

Iraq believes it has mustered enough support at the Council to have the sanctions suspended or at least eased by May.

It blames their continuation on Washington which demands that Baghdad fulfill Council demands other than the 1991 Gulf war ceasefire terms before allowing it to export oil again.

Official Iraqi media depicted Ms. Albright's tour as a desperate attempt to persuade other Council members not to back any move by France and Russia to have the sanctions eased or lifted.

The Iraqi News Agency meanwhile describes the opening of a French diplomatic interests section in Baghdad, "a step in the right direction."

Jean-Francois Nodinot, who will stay on as section chief, opened the legation at the Romanian embassy in a ceremony attended by the Romanian ambassador and a number of Iraqi officials.

Paris' Jan. 6 announcement that it would open the section drew fire from the United States and Britain.

France participated in the U.S.-led coalition that defeated the Iraqis in 1991

WORLD SUMMIT: U.N. Secretary General Boutros Ghali hands over the hammer of chairman to Danish Prime Minister Poul Nyrup Rasmussen while an unidentified U.N. official looks on during the opening ceremony of the U.N. World Summit for Social Development (see page one) (AFP photo)

Kuwaiti activist urges post-war rights probe

KUWAIT (R) — A Kuwaiti human rights activist has asked parliament to investigate rights violations allegedly committed by Kuwaitis against foreign residents who helped the 1990-91 Iraqi occupation, a newspaper reported on Monday.

Abdul Ali Al Abdul Ali, a member of the Arab Organisation of Human Rights, urged the emirate's parliament to investigate "human rights violations which took place in Kuwait soon after the liberation," the Arab Times said.

Alleged extrajudicial killings in the aftermath of Kuwait's 1991 liberation from seven months of Iraqi occupation continue to haunt the emirate despite repeated government assurances that it is investigating the incidents.

Iraq invaded Kuwait in 1990 and annexed it as its 19th province before a U.S.-led coalition drove Iraqi troops out of the oil-rich state in February 1991.

A 1991 U.S. State Department report said Kuwaitis committed more than 300 killings as they pursued foreigners suspected of collaborating.

Kuwait says any killings that took place happened in regrettable but understandable conditions of post-war chaos.

A court in December 1993 jailed a former interior ministry official for 15 years for murdering a Lebanese man and his son and trying to kill the man's daughter in March 1991. He remains the only official so far jailed for post-liberation killings.

"Such an action will boost Kuwait's image," Arab Times quoted Mr. Abdul Ali as saying in a letter setting out his proposal to the opposition-dominated parliament.

The English-language daily said Mr. Abul Ali wanted "a legal mechanism to uncover such violations and bring to justice the people who committed them."

Hizbollah kills SLA militiaman

TYRE, Lebanon (Agencies) — Hizbollah guerrillas killed a pro-Israeli militiaman and wounded two others in a bomb attack on Monday in South Lebanon, Israeli and Hizbollah sources reported.

The operation coincided with ascheduled visit to occupied Jerusalem by the commander of Israel's proxy South Lebanon Army (SLA) militia, retired Lebanese army General Antoine Lahd.

Israeli military officials said a bomb exploded and shots were fired as an SLA patrol drove along a road in the central sector of Israel's self-declared "security zone," killing one militiaman and wounding two others.

A Hizbollah source in the southern port of Tyre said guerrillas detonated a bomb on the Hula road and another one 40 minutes later as a back-up SLA unit rushed to the scene.

Police in South Lebanon said Israeli and SLA forces retaliated by lobbing 40 shells on the village of Shaqra damaging four homes but causing no casualties.

The hostilities add complications to a new peace-promoting shuttle by U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher to break the deadlock in Israel's peace talks with Syria and Lebanon.

Mr. Christopher is scheduled to arrive in the region Wednesday.

The 9:15 a.m. (0715 GMT) blast occurred as Israeli tanks and artillery hit guerrilla hideouts and infiltration routes through olive groves surrounding 12 villages facing the enclave's central sector.

Police in Nabatiyah said no casualties were reported from the sporadic bombardment. Thousands of residents huddled in basements from dusk through dawn.

A police statement said Israeli helicopter gunships made nightlong reconnaissance sorties over the region under parachute flares, drawing anti-aircraft fire from Lebanese army positions. No hits were reported.

In Jerusalem, Gen. Lahd told reporters:

"Lebanon will not be able to take any real decision or independent stance as long as one part of it is occupied by Syria and another — the security zone — by Israel."

He put Israel and Syria on the same footing, although his 3,000-man SLA is financed and armed by Israel.

Meeting in Wadi Musa reviews EU programmes

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

TAYBET ZAMAN, Wadi Musa — About 100 delegates from European and Middle Eastern countries met here Monday to review a number of European Union (EU)-sponsored programmes aimed at encouraging regional development and cooperation and promoting understanding among Europe and peoples of the area.

The delegates, who represent EU institutions, media organisations, town and city councils and academic institutes in the area and Europe, will during the three-day conference on "peace networks" look into means of developing EU programmes and make recommendations that the EU will take into consideration in projects to encourage cooperation in the region.

The conference, which is organised by the European Commission, will review "Peace URBS, Peace Media and Peace Campus," programmes, which were launched in Copenhagen in 1993.

EU officials say that the purpose of these programmes is to link EU countries with Middle Eastern parties to the multilateral phase of the peace talks.

The "Peace Media" programme involves media professionals in these countries: the "Peace Campus" encourages cooperation among universities and the "Peace URBS" brings together city council officials.

Addressing the opening session of the conference, which is taking place in this touristic village on the outskirts of Petra, head of the EU delegation to Jordan Yves Gazzo stressed the importance Europe attaches to the development of the Middle East, saying that Europe wants complete "political, cultural and financial association" with countries of the region.

Mr. Gazzo cited a conference the EU will hold in Barcelona in November, as one of the efforts Europe is making to achieve better understanding with EU non-members in the Mediterranean region.

The Barcelona conference will bring together EU members with 11 Mediterranean states that have signed cooperation accords with the EU.

During their meeting in Wadi Musa, participants in the peace programmes will hold workshops during which they will discuss projects the EU will finance under the peace networks this year.

Israeli, Palestinian unions sign agreement

TEL AVIV (AFP) — The Histadrut labour union confederation and the Palestinian Workers Trade Unions have signed a cooperation agreement after a year of talks, Israeli officials said Monday.

Histadrut general secretary Chaim Ramon signed the deal for job creation and joint projects with Palestinian labour leader Shaher Saad in Tel Aviv on Sunday.

The agreement settled a long-standing bone of contention over compulsory payments to the Histadrut by Palestinians working in Israel, without receiving full benefits.

The Israeli union is to pay back half of the dues levied since the PLO autonomy accord was signed in September 1993.

"The agreement, the first of its kind, commits the two peoples and not two governments," Mr. Ramon told reporters. "I hope it will contribute towards peace."

Mr. Saad said PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat's self-rule authority totally supported the union agreement and said

(Continued on page 7)

Amman to see hectic diplomacy

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Jordan will host three and possibly four major international figures in the next two weeks, starting with U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher on Saturday and ending with U.S. Vice-President Al Gore on March 21.

British Prime Minister John Major arrives on March 14. U.S. Defence Secretary William Perry might be visiting Jordan on March 18, according to unconfirmed reports.

Mr. Christopher, who insisted on making a Middle East trip aimed at addressing the troubled peace process despite a health problem, is expected to arrive Saturday for a brief visit for a review of developments in the Jordanian-Israeli track on the peace process after the two countries signed a peace treaty on Oct. 26.

One of the key themes for his discussions here is expected to be the status of Jordan's request for economic and military assistance from the U.S.

Jordanian officials are expected to bring up the subject of the recent slashing of an administration proposal for $275 million in outlays to write off $488 million in Jordan's debts to the U.S.

U.S. President Bill Clinton called Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin last week to reassure him that the U.S. administration was committed to ensuring the full allocation, reports said.

While this particular issue need not necessarily worry Jordan too much if only because the White House has ways and means to reinstate the full allocation in the Senate despite the reduction by a House of Representatives sub-committee, Jordanian leaders are also expected to voice their disappointment that the administration is proposing only $43 million economic and military aid to Jordan in fiscal 1996.

Jordan has reportedly asked for $2.5 billion annually for the next 10 years.

Also expected to be touched during Mr. Christopher's talks here are preparations for the Amman economic summit scheduled to be held in October.

Jordan's military needs and the issue of American aid are also expected to figure high during talks with Defence Secretary Perry and Vice-President Gore, who will be making the trip to Jordan as part of a regional tour starting in Egypt on March 19.

Jordanian-British relations and means to expand economic cooperation and increase British investments in the Kingdom are expected to top Jordanian leaders' talks with Mr. Major, who will be making his first visit as prime minister to Jordan.

Britain has cancelled nearly $100 million of Jordan's official debts to the United Kingdom. That leaves around $400 million Amman's obligations to the British government and government agencies. It is not clear whether the Major government is in a position to offer further relief to Jordan or is planning any more cancellation of Jordanian debts. Also unclear is whether the debts are of a nature that would allow for any form of relief.

Aid groups plan for life after U.N. in Somalia

NAIROBI (R) — Aid groups on Monday laid down terms for returning to anarchic Somalia now their United Nations protectors have left, saying they would not risk their lives.

But a leading official told a news conference he would meet clan leaders in the Horn of Africa country next week to present demands for security and freedom of movement for aid groups.

And two aid workers released after a five-day kidnapping said they were ready to go back.

Sigurd Illing, European Commission special envoy for Somalia and a member of the standing committee of Somalia Aid Coordination Body (SACB) said in Nairobi a new code drawn up by aid agencies asked Somalis to punish anyone who attacked aid workers or harmed their operations.

"We are not willing to take the risk of life anymore in Somalia," he said.

"SACB will monitor closely the implementation of this code and advise donors and other international partners to take appropriate action whenever deemed necessary, including suspension of activities," Mr. Illing added.

The SACB also wants Somali clan elders to provide offices and accommodation, allow agencies to decide how to meet their own transport and staffing needs and make sure personnel and aid-related cargo are exempt from extortion by militias.

The head of the United Nation's World Food Programme (WFP) said she hoped its aid workers would return to Mogadishu within a few days after pulling out of the Somali capital with U.N. peacekeeping troops.

"We fully expect to send international staff back in," WFP Executive Director Catherine Bertini said in an interview with Reuters at the agency's Rome headquarters.

"It could be within a few days, if the situation looks safe," she said.

Ms. Bertini said the WFP had workers distributing food and running development programmes in other parts of Somalia. "We haven't left (Somalia) and we don't intend to leave.

"The only thing that could make us leave is if they start this war all up again and it's just impossible for us to stay," she said.

"But we are cautiously optimistic that they want us there and that won't happen."

The WFP is the U.N. agency responsible for distributing emergency food aid.

It was instrumental in feeding starving Somalis after December 1992, when U.S. troops sprearheaded a U.N. military operation to stop fighting between armed militias from disrupting food aid distribution.

Expatriate WFP workers and those of other U.N. agencies and non-governmental aid groups left Mogadishu shortly before the last U.N. peacekeeping troops withdrew on Friday.

The pullout ended a two-year U.N. stay, costing some $3 billion, whose mission to bring peace to Somalia failed.

The U.N. was unable to broker an accord between the clan militia leaders that would lead to the formation of an interim government, despite holding several conferences.

Ms. Bertini declined to give an opinion about the U.N.'s peacekeeping efforts in Somalia, but said she believed the world body had

(Continued on page 7)

COLUMN 8

Sprinting U.S. housing secretary helps nab robbers

WASHINGTON (AFP) — The mild mannered U.S. housing secretary took a turn as superhero in downtown Washington, chasing down two youths who tried to steal watches from a street vendor. "What kind of citizen or government leader would I be if I didn't try to help," said Henry Cisneros, who was leaving a barber shop Saturday when he saw the would-be thieves grab two trays of watches and make their getaway on foot. Cisneros, 47, pursued the youths aged 15 and 17 down two alleys and across two streets as the stolen merchandise scattered. A police officer who joined Cisneros grabbed one youth in the chase and caught the other who was cornered by the secretary. Cisneros did not don a cape for the incident, but he said he always tries to "work out and stay in shape."

Hirohito's widow turns 92

TOKYO (AP) — Empress Dowager Nagako, widow of the late Emperor Hirohito, turned 92 Monday, making her the longest-living empress in the history of Japan's ancient chrysanthemum throne. Empress Nagako, who is also the mother of Japan's reigning emperor, Akihito, marked the day quietly. Celebrations were cancelled because she is suffering from a cold, according to palace authorities. The Empress Dowager, who was never particularly fond of media attention, hasn't made a public appearance for several months. The palace Monday released a recent video of her, however, and in it she appeared frail but alert. She is confined to a wheelchair. At 92, Empress Nagako has now lived longer than Empress Kanshi, wife of the Emperor Go-Reizei, who reigned from 1045-1068. Empress Kanshi lived to be 92 by the old method of reckoning, in which everyone was counted as one year old at birth.

Parish revolts over thrice-married vicar's sacking

SWAFFHAM, England (AFP) — Worshippers in a rural English parish have decided that divorce and devout Christianity can go together — by revolting in support of their vicar after the church sacked him for getting married too often. Parishioners in the eastern village of Swaffham threatened to secede from their diocese after the Reverend Kit Chalcraft was dismissed, press reports here said. When he divorced his first wife, the Anglican diocese of Norwich was sympathetic. When his second marriage also failed it continued to show tolerance. But the announcement of his third wedding in November was the last straw. The Bishop of Norwich, Peter Noot, observed that 57-year-old Chalcraft's behaviour could not be reconciled with Christian criteria on marriage, and gave him notice of dismissal which came into effect at the end of February. The ruling provoked a far from Christian response from his flock, around 100 of whom booed the bishop when he attended a ceremony at nearby Foulden Church to welcome Chalcraft's hapless locum replacement, Arthony Foottit. Parishioners, who described Noot as an "arrogant man," argued that Chalcraft, who has served the community for 27 years, had fallen victim to a "terrible injustice" which will cost him his job, house and social standing.

Tongans pay big price for fatty lifestyle

AUCKLAND (AFP) — Tongans, among the world's biggest people, are battling weight and rising health problems because of fatty Western foods, the government owned Tonga Chronicle reported in its latest issue received here Monday. Tongans are being urged in a government campaign to bring down their weight. Government medical officer Malaki 'Ake said many of the problems came through the popularity of high-fat, low-cost imported meat

Displaced Palestinians unimpressed with talks for their return

By Mohammad Hasni
Agence France Presse

HITTIN CAMP — Palestinians in Jordan's refugee camps have shown little enthusiasm for Arab-Israeli talks designed to help some of them return to the homes they fled in the 1967 Middle East war.

The PLO, Israel, Jordan and Egypt will begin their first talks on the fate of hundreds of thousands of displaced Palestinians when they meet Tuesday in Amman, 15 kilometres southwest of Hittin camp, one of 10 camps in Jordan.

Many of those who fled the West Bank and Gaza Strip to Jordan — but also to Egypt, Syria and Lebanon — expected few results from the talks, felt settled in Jordan, or said everything depended on the fate of Middle East peace.

"It will just be another meeting and I'll probably die here," 60-year-old Abu Mohammad said pointing to the streets of this refugee camp.

The one-day meeting will allow "the four parties to make contact and set the general framework for the talks," which come under the 1993 accords for Palestinian self-rule, a Jordanian official said.

Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organisation, already bogged down in trying to extend autonomy on the West Bank, have sharply different views on the fate of the displaced of 1967.

Israel opposes any mass return of displaced Palestinians, which it says number 150,000 to 200,000, while the PLO, which wants a staggered right of return, says the numbers have swelled to 1,485,000 with all their dependents today.

The United Nations estimates that 350,000 Palestinians were displaced by the fighting almost thirty years ago.

Assef Awadi, who was born in Hittin Camp after his parents fled here from Gaza, said: "You can't ask someone who has been shipwrecked to let go of the raft he's holding onto for unknown of returning home.

"I certainly want to see my right to return recognised but not be forced to return," said Mr. Awadi.

Mr. Awadi is among 70,000 Gazans who have only the right to a two-year travel permit because Gaza was under Egyptian rule while the West Bank was under Jordanian rule.

Those interviewed at a sports club at Al Wahdat refugee camp in the Amman suburbs said their return was linked to the future of the Arab-Israeli peace process.

"Return will only be possible with a comprehensive peace and a Palestinian state," Mohammed Adarbah, a 42-year-old businessman said.

A 39-year-old civil servant, Ahmad Al Kuz, said: "What interests us most of all is the creation of a Palestinian state."

A Jordanian official at the department of Palestinian affairs, Abdul Karim Abul Haija, said Jordan "is trying to win the right of return for all the displaced without forcing them to leave Jordan."

It will be up to the displaced, who the department estimates number between 600,000 and 700,000 in Jordan, to decide whether to stay in the Kingdom or return to the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Participating will be foreign ministers Abdul Karim Kabariti, Amr Musa of Egypt, Shimon Peres of Israel and a delegate from the Palestinian Authority, which runs self-rule in Gaza and the West Bank town of Jericho.

The displaced live mainly in six of Jordan's 10 Palestinian refugee camps, with refugees from the first Arab-Israeli war of 1948 living in the other four camps.

Apart from the displaced, Jordan alone hosts almost half of the 1,239,000 refugees registered with UNRWA.

U.N. General Assembly Resolution 194 adopted on Dec. 11, 1949 recognises their right to return or receive compensation.

The term "refugee" applies to Palestinians who fled the areas where the state of Israel was proclaimed in 1948, while "displaced" refers to those who came from the areas occupied in 1967.

The fate of the refugees from 1948 is to be discussed during the negotiations on the final status of the Gaza Strip, West Bank, and East Jerusalem, which are to begin no later than May 1996.